

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΔΡΟΣΙΝΗΣ

AMARYLLIS

889.3

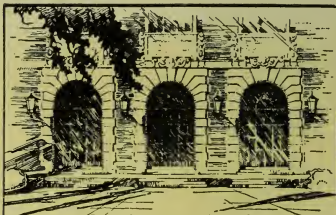
D83aE



LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
FATERNOSTER SQUARE

M DCCC XCI

PSEUDONYM LIBRARY



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

Tom Turner Collection

889.3
D83aE



AMARYLLIS

PSEUDONYM LIBRARY

THE
PSEUDONYM LIBRARY.

Paper, 1/6 ; cloth, 2/-.

1. MLLE. IXE. By LANOE
FALCONER. 5th ed.
2. STORY OF ELEANOR
LAMBERT. By MAGDA-
LEN BROOKE.
3. MYSTERY OF THE CAM-
PAGNA. By VON DEGEN.
2nd ed.
4. THE SCHOOL OF ART.
By ISABEL SNOW.
5. AMARYLLIS. By
ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΔΡΟΣΙΝΗΣ.

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΔΡΟΣΙΝΗΣ

AMARYLLIS



LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

PATERNOSTER SQUARE

M DCCC XCI

889.3

D83aE



AMARYLLIS.

I.

“**D**EAR FRIEND,—
Yesterday evening I
returned—came back
from my retreat. I
want to see you to-
night. Shall I go to
you—or will you come to me?
Greetings. STEPHEN.”

At last, then, he has made up his mind to leave his hills and groves! This young lawyer went to his uncle's estate to renew his health after the fatigue of his examination, and going away for two weeks only he has been absent two months. Two months!

and where? why “at the farthest corner of the earth—in a village inhabited solely by about two hundred two-legged brutes engaged in sowing and reaping barley and maize”—so at least he himself said before he went thither. And who is this “he”? Why Stephen—one who was altogether devoted to “society”—the most regular and the gayest of all the frequenters of theatres and “at homes.” When he consented to leave Athens for a while—solely to please his uncle, who wished him to see this country property of his—he grumbled, and worried, and lamented at the mere prospect of a fifteen days’ exile: and yet he has been quite content to quadruple it. Contrary to his usual gracious custom he has never written to me once during the time, and it has only been through his uncle that I learnt that he was well—and enjoying himself. I was able to comprehend the first announcement—but how about the second?

I turned all these thoughts over in my mind whilst I folded and unfolded again and again this little note of my friend. I glanced once more at his delicate but careless handwriting, and ran over his words. But I must answer it—a duty which I had almost forgotten hitherto—for I must appoint a place of meeting as he requests. I therefore wrote upon my card, “I will neither go to you—nor shall you come to me. We will meet at the railway station 7 p.m. I have no notion of being shut up in a room in the month of July.”

I called my servant and despatched him to Stephen with this note. He sent word back “Very well,” and reserved any further answer. At 7 p.m. we met at the entrance of the railway station, and notwithstanding the looks of curiosity exhibited on the face of beholders, embraced each other like country cousins.

In a little while we were on the Phalerum heights.

“I must needs tell you,” I began, “that until I received your note of to-day, I did not believe that you would return to Athens any more, but thought that you would settle down definitely upon your uncle’s estate—as his steward.”

“Well—notwithstanding the satirical tones in which those words are uttered by you, I declare most fervently that I would gladly have accepted the post of steward if it had been possible for me to pass the rest of my life among the woods, and by the sea, as happily as those last two months—but——”

“Truly, from a health point of view you look brilliant—as ruddy and sunburnt as if you had been travelling in Africa. It seems to me, however, that during these two months the mind has been sacrificed to the body—when the spirit slumbers, the body is nourished.”

“You are at fault,” he answered gaily; “my mind has not

been slumbering during these two months. On the contrary, it has been released from the bonds of a conventional and monotonous existence, and has spread its wings——”

“And flown away?—If it has flown away, I can see nothing in that upon which to congratulate you,” said I, laughing.

Stephen was offended.

“Why do you flout me thus?”

“I do not flout you: I merely laugh at the unusual style of your conversation. I was not prepared for this. On the contrary, I expected that after having associated for two months with peasants your language would be somewhat rougher, and that at first your discourse would be about wheat, flocks, and felling trees: but you begin with poetry! Perhaps you had Victor Hugo with you—or did the prefect of the village lend you ‘Byron’ out of his library?”

Stephen was evidently displeased. Throughout all this

speech of mine he had been fidgeting on his seat, and drawing polygons in the sands with his cane. I watched his face attentively in a mischievous kind of temper. He was silent, and his brows were knitted as his custom often was.

“Have you anything more to say—or have you finished? If you have anything more, I shall leave you to say it to the sea.”

“Bah! I see you have learnt to be offended for a mere trifle. That’s a bad fault, and you hadn’t got it before you went away.”

“I don’t know which is the worst fault—yours or mine. I *am* offended—and you have offended me. You began badly,” he complained.

“Nevertheless it was yourself who gave me the opportunity with your ‘wings of the mind.’”

“And I keep to it still. I say that in the country, in solitude, the spirit does not slumber—as you say—but is released—and

risers ennobled, and cleansed from all the vulgar defilements of cities : it inhales the air alone, with fresh dewes from trees and waves."

"Where did you read all this?"

"In the book which God has written and which is called Nature. It is written in words so large that only blind men like yourself are unable to read it."

"Thank you for your last amiable remark. I am a trifle near-sighted, as my eye-glasses testify, but I read the book of Nature a long while before you—when you, indeed, were absolutely ignorant of it. Until yesterday, you jeered at such things as *romantic follies*, for thus you styled them. I rejoice that you are repenting so heartily, and I promise that I will be ironical no longer—but then you must make me a promise."

"What?"

"That you will be frank with me."

“What do you mean by that?”

“I mean that after such coldness and indifference, this sudden affection for and worship of Nature, this love of solitude and the country, does not take place quite so simply as this has occurred. Something has brought this to pass—something else.”

Stephen looked fixedly at me.

“You are the very devil,” he said, smiling.

“By which you mean that I am an intelligent man—a common enough person in Greece. Say on then.”

“Since you guess——”

“Hold there! I guess something, but what that something is you must tell me yourself—if you will, that is.”

“Can’t you in some way imagine it?”

“Certainly, if you wish it. You shall have a lesson forthwith on the logical deductions which I draw from your sophistry.”

“Are you beginning again?”

“Ah, yes!—forgive me—these are my fees for my lessons on logic. Well, you went away from Athens sorrowing merely on that account, and we all, knowing your character, considered that it was most natural—because, look you, you are a man for society and not for solitude. What charms could solitude offer to enchant you as you have been enchanted? Certainly neither its woods nor its rocks, nor indeed its products—all these you knew before hand; these you expected to find. There was something else, something with more vitality, something more enticing—something—in short, you are in love with some country girl.”

He laughed outright.

“Intelligent men sometimes say foolish things—as, for instance, this remark of yours.”

“So! Do you think that I study psychology only in print, and that I do not apply my

experience to physiognomies? Say now, if you dare, that you are not in love?"

"I don't deny it. I would have told you without your psychological experiments; but it was folly for you to think that I was in love with a peasant girl."

"Why not? Have not those idyllic loves their charm? Don't you read in romances how many peasant girls have turned the heads of princes? Now, I'll tell you what my fancy is. I always like opposites. Among flowers it is either the highly-cultivated garden rose, or the lowly wild violet of the hills; and among women it is either the most elegant queen of the drawing-room, or the humblest shepherdess in the village. Between those two types there exist only mediocrity and something concrete. You force me to cast on one side my first impression. It might perhaps be foolish to become enamoured of a peasant

girl, but it would be degrading to all your fine sentiments if you were to be in love with a sturdy provincial damsel, the daughter of some corn-dealer or general store keeper, the very burlesque and caricature of a refined gentlewoman."

"You have made another slip with your aphorisms. Let the poor provincial alone. Neither is it she who has led me captive."

"Ah! perhaps it is a *lady*, or a *Miss* traveller!"

"Now, for the last time, you are only troubling and fatiguing your own mind by these mistakes. Have you read Theocritus?"

"I am able to say 'yes' to that query."

"Do you remember how the third idyll begins?"

"Wait a minute. Ah, yes! the third idyll begins, 'Courting I sing Amaryllis'; but what need have we here of Theocritus and Amaryllis?"

"What need? It is Amaryllis

who, as you say, made solitude so pleasant."

"These are enigmas. No woman now-a-days is named 'Amaryllis.'"

"It was I who christened her 'Amaryllis.' Have some patience and you shall learn the why and the wherefore."

"You are coming to fish in my pool, but whilst in the beginning you said that she was not a peasant girl, you now confess that she is. What other than some graceful rustic maiden can this Amaryllis of yours be?"

"Not so; my Amaryllis on the contrary combines those two extremes of womanly perfection—as you understand them."

"Indeed!"

"She is a peasant girl on the hills and a queen in the city!" He raised his voice with a tone of pride as he uttered these last words.

"Ah! I see things are becoming serious — here are materials for a romance! Begin now and tell me all from the

very first. I comprehend why you wanted to see me to-night. Impressions and memories are boiling up within you, and you just want to relieve yourself and put your burden on my back."

"I can divine your curiosity, but to punish you a little I won't tell you one word until we have supped. I am hungry."

"What a beautiful feeling that must be which breeds hunger."

"When the heart is fasting, it is then that the stomach is a-hungered. If I am sorrowful or angry, I am hungry; when I have joy and am glad, my appetite is gone."

"Then mine ought to have fled ere now."

"Why?"

"Because I am expecting your Amaryllis."

Our supper was a silent one. Stephen reserved all his conversational powers for the coming rehearsal of his rustic adventures, and I on the other hand was tormenting myself the while by

trying to imagine from the character of his first confessions what could be the nature of these adventures over which my friend's prologue cast so much mystery.

But when supper was over I had even then twice or thrice to beseech Stephen to fulfil his promise, whilst he, after a practice common enough with those who are really impatient to tell something, kept deferring it from minute to minute.

At last, as the gentle waves rolled to our feet and with silvery foam flowed murmuring onwards, whilst there floated from the distant theatre in almost inaudible tones the tender strains of the "*Somnambula*," it pleased my enamoured friend to add to these eventide harmonies his low and confidential voice ; but in order to save time he first gave me a letter, which I was to read aloud by the light of a lamp—a letter of his addressed to me, which oddly enough he now gave me with his own hand.



II.

STEPHEN'S LETTER.

“**I**T is quite unnecessary to write to you concerning the wretchedness of my journey, as I am known to be essentially a terrestrial animal. So soon as I set my foot on ship-board and touch the sea, as it were, I am transformed into a soulless package—a chest—what you will—so that any one might send me very economically along with the luggage, instead of my most unjustly paying for a ticket. In consequence of this idiosyncrasy, my eyelids opened for the first

time upon the shore at which I intended to disembark. The first object which I there saw before me was an enormous fustanella,¹ the wearer of which saluted me with 'Welcome, master!' I recognized him as my uncle's steward, who had been telegraphed to meet me, and I was able to thank him for his trouble. When we had landed, however, I was so giddy that I paid no heed to the little provincial town through which we rode. I was otherwise engaged in trying to keep on my beast, because everything all around looked misty and topsy-turvy; but when we had left the town behind us, and had got into the open plain, the fresh morning air began at once to give me new life, and my eyes turned joyfully to the wonderful horizon crowned with high, well-wooded hills, and adorned on one side by a blue strip of sea.

"We passed through the middle of golden-green fields, for

¹ White kilt.

the corn was not quite ripe as yet ; then we came to a small forest of plane trees ; and lastly, after galloping awhile under the thick shade of fragrant pines, we reached my uncle's estate and dismounted before the gate of his tower. This tower is not a large building. It much resembles a windmill, and only consists of two rooms ; but its situation is most charming. The foaming waves dash against its very foundations, whilst on the land side there rise, step by step as it were to heaven, the slopes of the mountain clothed with elms, pines, and large oaks. Round the tower are strewn the little white cottages and thatched huts of the peasantry, in the middle of which is visible a bare patch which marks out the place for the threshing-floors already prepared to receive the coming harvest. The interior of the tower is, however, wretched ; the roof is of rough unhewn wood, and black with smoke ; the walls

whitewashed, the windows narrow and confined, and the furniture—good God ! how am I to sleep on those three-legged stools with their narrow planks ? The steward promises to spread over them a good many woollen coverlets, which he will send out for and collect from the peasants' houses, but I mistrust the cleanliness of those rugs ! The rustics who came to bid me welcome seemed good worthy men enough, but the cleanliness of their bodies did not correspond with the purity of their souls. If it were possible, I would despatch them all into a bath before inviting them to the house. The steward boasts that he is himself skilled in cookery, and that in honour to me he has concentrated all his powers in the dinner of this evening, because at noon I breakfasted upon what was just ready to hand—namely, a few eggs, fresh butter, and milk: and these I prefer infinitely to the cookery of the steward.

“Alas! unhappy stomach! what preparation of fowls was that of which you partook this night? Wretched me! I swallowed it because I was a-hungred and had no fears. How soft were the fifty onions that it contained! To-morrow I must do a little cooking for myself!

“None the worse so far, so at sunset I went out for a little walk. What savages! All the animals of the country, from the hens to the well-to-do women, took flight as soon as they saw me. It seems that either my exterior or my gun inspired them with fear and mistrust, for even the dogs barked at me frightfully. In order that this should not occur again I may possibly resort to the wearing of a kilt during these days of my imprisonment! As for the peasant women! Miserable creatures, where is their poetry!—unwashed, uncombed, with faces burnt by the sun, with hands roughened with making bread and washing

clothes, with naked feet covered with mud and dust ! O ye graceful wood nymphs ! ye heroines of Idylls ! O Muses of the silly poets ! who sing of you because they have not seen you —keep for others your sympathy and love, keep your beauty for the youths and soldiers of the village, I beseech you. May God keep me from you !

“The rising of the moon out of the wood was indeed lovely, but I hardly ventured to go outside to drink my coffee amid its silvery light, for the night air’s icy breath affected me so that I shivered again and was obliged to return to my room. What a climate ! There is no doubt that I shall have chilblains in the month of May ! The steward was not wrong in advising me to cover myself with a *cape* at night ; with a *cape* ! as if I were in a klepht’s stronghold.

“ I am writing to you upon a thick table which serves me for a desk, but could equally well

serve a butcher whereupon to cut up his rams and calves. It is the work of a distinguished upholsterer — a miller — the steward tells me. A petroleum lamp which glimmers, and smokes, and smells frightfully, gives me light. My eyes are blinded with its red flame, I am stifled with the smell — so I extinguish it and go to bed. I hear an owl which from afar calls to me ‘good night.’ But midnight is near, so ‘good night’ also to thee! . . .

“And ‘good day’ too!—it is dawning, thank God! This accursed night is over—this night which lasted so long that it seemed to be waiting to see the daybreak and another Herakles. And yet Kazamias says that the nights in May are short. They may be elsewhere, but certainly not on my uncle’s estate. Oh, verily! I must close the ranks at my back, for it aches as though they had laden me with logs, and those rough coverlets have

scratched my face and hands as though they had been clawed by cats ! What shall I say, too, of the innumerable insects which defiled before me ? This ever-blessed steward appears to have converted my uncle's house into an entomological cabinet ! But I'll take means for their dispersion, for with three nights like this last I shall be ill from blood-letting. Fortunately I brought plenty of insect powder with me.

“ Pity me ! pity me ! I have still to be here ten days and ten nights ! two hundred and forty hours ! How shall I get them over ? Reading ? I succumb ; walking ? I get tired ; conversing ? with whom, and about what, pray you ? And the very idea that it is not possible, that there is no way, to leave sooner, only redoubles my impatience.

“ How can I ply my uncle's nets if I don't know how ! I came here to recruit myself after my labours, but I shall suffer worse things ; I shall become a hypo-

chondriac,—or shall blow my brains out——”

“I see that all in this letter is written with your usual good-humour. One thing only I cannot understand—why you did not send to me that which would have amused me so much?”

“I did not send it to you, for a very simple reason. When I told the steward to find me a porter in order to take it to the town (you see there is no post-office on my uncle’s estate), he told me that there was plenty of time, because it was two days before the post would go to Athens; and after two days matters had so utterly changed that the letter seemed to me unjust, absurd, and laughable; and so instead of sending it I put it into my pocket-book, and thus you see you have it to-day. Now then, I will take up my recital as following upon this letter which contains my first impressions—but upon this agree-

ment only, namely that you will neither put any inconsiderate questions to me, nor interrupt me, nor give me cause for offence."

"On the morrow, like another Robinson Crusoe, I began to devise means for passing a more easy night, and succeeded in making a straw bed. I filled every hole I found with insect powder, took out the planks and steeped them in hot water, and for the first time in my life became a perfect housekeeper. I told the steward that I was longing for roast meat, that I might be delivered from his experiments in cookery; and thanks to Sardou's 'Magdalene,' and his pleasant style, I passed away the time till noon without being aware of it. So far, so good. A rustic called upon me later on, and asked me to take a walk with him through the woods. I had no great desire for it, but did not wish him to think me disdainful, and there-

fore I went. And in truth I did not repent doing so, for all Nature was arrayed in blossoms, and the earth was green and perfumed with flowers. I was nevertheless somewhat bored by my companion, who was almost wholly without any culture, and moreover was deaf. The chief thing I gained by this walk was a woeful appetite. On account of this I returned straight to the house and attacked the roast. Never in my life before had I eaten so much, and the steward regarded me with astonishment.

“When I went to my bedroom, the first thing I saw upon my pillow was a visiting card—Anastasius P——. At first I only noticed the name, but looking at it closer I saw something written in pencil above it. Upon taking it to the window I read as follows: ‘Dear Sir and Neighbour,—I came to bid you welcome, but found you from home. Will it be indiscreet if

I ask you to come to-morrow morning to take milk with me in my garden?' I called the steward and inquired of him who this Mr. Anastasius was.

" ' Mr. Anastasius is the proprietor of the adjoining village, a good man of a certain age who comes in the spring to his estate here and leaves after the vintage.'

" ' Why did you not tell me before ? '

" ' The carrier had not brought it.'

" ' Is his house far from here ? '

" ' About half an hour's walk.'

" ' I shall go to-morrow morning. Get a boy to go with me to show me the way ? '

" ' I will go myself, for I want to speak to Mr. Anastasius' manager.'

" My neighbour's invitation was not unpleasing to me. At first I thought he was only some rich provincial, some wealthy landholder who was nevertheless an uninformed man and without

any taste, but when I glanced at his card for the second time, and saw the delicate characters and aristocratic style of the few words that he had written, I began to change my mind, and to think on the contrary that my neighbour must be a noble and refined gentleman who comes here in the summer time only for the sake of his estate. Under this impression I went to bed, and slept so well that my steward was obliged to knock at my door at five o'clock, as I had ordered him, in order to awaken me.

“The way appeared to me most delightful; the early hour conduced to this, but still more was it conduced by the hope that I should find at last a man with whom I could pass an hour in converse; a real man, with whom I could have intercommunion during the next ten days of my exile. Then I regretted it again, lest he should not be what I imagined, but some odd, taciturn,

and inaccessible old man ; and when I had repeated this to myself, I found many arguments to ratify the conclusion that age of itself would separate us—I with my twenty, and he with his fifty years ; what agreeable similarity in ideas or feelings could there be between them ? But by this time we had reached the garden of his estate, or rather gardens, for his whole property consisted of some thousand acres.

“ Its position is not so beautiful as that of my uncle’s tower, for the sea is not near ; nor has it the same picturesque prospect : on the contrary, it is rather flat and a little monotonous. But there is no comparison in respect to the prettiness of its appearance, for instead of a ruin like my uncle’s windmill, here was a trim little house embosomed among green trees, and crowned with wreaths to its very chimneys. I could not have believed that in this wilderness there could be found such a garden

and so charming a homestead, The door was of iron trellis-work, and one had to pass through the garden to reach the house.

“A little servant wearing a kilt, but much cleaner than our steward, opened it for us.

“‘My master says will you please to excuse him for a moment, as he has gone to the threshing-floor. Please to rest in the summer-house,’ said he, politely, ‘until he arrives.’

“The steward, out of respect to myself, would not enter with me, therefore I followed the small servant who showed me into the summer-house. I cannot describe the garden, but imagine the most lovely one that Patesia possesses transported to this lonely corner of Greece. The summer-house was not expensive in its construction, being made entirely of trunks of trees and reeds woven together, but it was very picturesque. Two or three honeysuckles festooned it

all over, and their odour was most delicious. A little wooden table and a few rustic chairs only were in it.

“ For some few moments I was quite bewildered, and rubbed my eyes to see if I were not dreaming, when suddenly, in order to complete the enchantment of the scene, as though all had been arranged beforehand, I heard, from behind the thick trees, a very sweet voice in soft, low tones sing the following words—

“ ‘ Blow, sweet breeze of morning,
Come refresh me now ;
And, sun, delay thy coming
Lest thou burn black my brow.’ ”

“ My gaze had been riveted on so many things at one time, that my mind did not seem able to grasp any more. I could not imagine whence came the melody I had heard, nor did I strive to discover—only one idea seemed to run through me, and I said to myself, ‘ This place is surely enchanted.’ I put my hand to my

forehead to hold in, as it were, my reasoning powers, when I heard footsteps on the stones without. A shiver ran through me as though I had taken a fever. Near — very near — the thick boughs of two trees were gently pushed aside, and in the middle appeared—Mr. Anastasius in his nightcap!

“Umph! you are irredeemable—you have disenchanted me—in the most effectual way!

“Enveloped in green leaves then came the head of a girl. Her hair was fair and curly, adorned with five or six white and red roses placed here and there with simple and careless grace. On each side of her face, instead of earrings hung a pair of large red cherries. I shut my eyes; summer-house, garden, heaven and earth—all went round.

“When I opened my eyes the vision had entirely changed. With one hand she held at her breast a large bunch—a real

mass of roses, in her other hand was a basket of cherries. She wore a white gown, very simple, and flowing round her form like foam. Hidden behind the honeysuckle I beheld her without being seen by her; but she suddenly approached and came towards the summer-house. I lost her the last moment, and she no sooner had perceived that a stranger was sitting there—really sitting on a chair—than she was so startled as to let fall at once all the roses she was carrying, and down they fluttered to the ground. But as soon as she became aware who I was, she blushed, and in a moment pulled the roses off her head, and also her charming earrings.

“I hardly succeeded in recovering my composure, but rose and greeted her.

“‘Madam,’ I said, and my tongue seemed tied, ‘I am very sorry that the first feeling with which I inspire you is fear. Forgive me.’

“ She gave me her hand, smiling.

“ ‘ My position is worse,’ she said; with ease, ‘ for I must certainly have inspired you with a sense of the ridiculous in these, my morning ornaments. The country, you see, makes children of us all. Even my father, when here, notwithstanding his age, is sometimes a child as well as myself.’

“ These last words enlightened me. This then was the daughter of Mr. Anastasius ! ‘ Heaven bless the daughter ! ’ I ejaculated to myself.





III.

“**I**N order to gain time,” pursued Stephen, taking up the thread of his discourse, “I stooped down, and helped her to gather up her scattered roses. Mr. Anastasius entering, found us in this position, and began by apologizing for keeping me waiting, and also thanked me warmly for coming directly I received his invitation. Of course I told him that I was grateful for his first visit, and that his acquaintance would be most valuable to me, especially in that lonely place.

“Amaryllis, who was cutting off the thorns and superfluous leaves from her roses, suddenly

looked at me with her large bright eyes.

“ ‘Does not the country please you?’ she said.

“ ‘Its loneliness and monotony oppress me.’

“ ‘I cannot compliment you at all for that opinion, but I think you are not yourself to blame. The country has its art, one must know how to live in it; it has its beautiful secrets—when you learn them you will change your opinion. I will give you a few lessons, I and my father together.’

“ ‘Yes, indeed,’ said Mr. Anastasius, smiling blandly, ‘and we will make a beginning to-night if you like. The first lesson shall be in the cave of the enchantress.’

“ ‘No, no!’ she cried, gaily, ‘that is for advanced pupils, later on. This evening we will begin with the spring.’

“ ‘With such good teachers there is no doubt that I shall become wise.’

“ ‘ If you are not very indolent—but then punishments must be resorted to,’ she said, archly.

“ You can well imagine that it was not only her beauty which by degrees roused my enthusiasm, but also her grace, her simplicity, and the frankness of her demeanour towards me, as though she had known me for a long time.

“ Amaryllis then went out to prepare the milk, and her father and I were left alone. When the light of her presence which had so dazzled my eyes was gone, I was able to examine the physiognomy of the father. It was the face of a man who had known sorrows during his life, sorrows which a calm and peaceful happiness had since veiled. His manners showed that he moved in intellectual society. By degrees, in the course of conversation, he told me with that frankness and confidence which belong to men of integrity, that he had been a merchant in

Marseilles, but that ten years ago he went to Athens with the determination of settling definitely; that having a longing for possessions in land, he bought this estate; that unhappily, after three years only, he had lost his wife, and shortly afterwards his youngest daughter, and that now there only remained Amaryllis, the one companion of his life. He then began to heap encomiums on her, not like many foolish parents whom affection blinds, but with the genuine emotion of a father grateful for his only child.

“I assure you I quite shared his emotion, and was glad that my first impressions of his daughter were thus ratified; and really for her to resolve to go to this wilderness and leave the world for six months in order to be a companion to her father, and not to be in the least distressed by so doing, but to transform the sacrifice into a pleasure, and her exile into enjoyment,

this of itself, you must confess, shows an angelic disposition.

“ When, therefore, she returned, with the small servant who carried the milk, I regarded her with still greater admiration. She sat near me.

“ We drank in silence the fresh sheep’s milk ; I had never drunk such beautiful milk before. Amaryllis suddenly turned, and looking at me said—

“ ‘ Shall you remain here all the summer ? ’

“ ‘ No, indeed ! only eight days longer.’

“ ‘ Well, well ! but you will not leave us so soon,’ she said, smiling.

“ If any one had said those words to me the previous day, I should have stifled him, and yet I heard it now with a great deal of pleasure, and answered—

“ ‘ I have every inclination to remain, if it be possible.’

“ The conversation then turned upon Athenian affairs, and afterwards to politics, which

did not in any way interest me, because Amaryllis could not bring into it, with her charmingly thrilling voice, the simple knowledge that she possessed. I saw the sun was getting high, and that I must leave. Very unwillingly therefore I rose, and bade Mr. Anastasius farewell. He pressed my hand warmly—

“ ‘ Do not forget that you are to come here this evening at five, in order that we may take our little excursion, and afterwards we will sup together.’ ”

“ On the table there was still a pile of roses. The girl chose five or six of the best and offered them to me.

“ ‘ Your share,’ she said, archly ; ‘ did we not pick them up together ? ’ ”

“ They both accompanied me to the garden gate, and reminded me again of the evening excursion, as if they feared I might forget it.

“ The steward had waited for me outside, and we returned

together by another circuitous and shady road, leading through the forest. You will guess that as soon as I arrived, my first care would be for my precious roses; then I shut myself up in my room, and with half-closed eyes began to recall from the very beginning all the unforeseen events which had occurred since the morning, and which seemed to me almost like a fairy tale. Now the wilderness began to show another face, and as these recollections were presented to me, so ever returned the thought that no one would compel me to leave in eight days, as my uncle would only be too pleased for me to remain longer. After a little while I entertained this idea still more definitely, so that the prophecy of that charming girl—‘You will not really go,’ seemed at once realized.

“What did I not do to pass away those blessed hours, and make half-past four come, so that I could start away! I cut

five or six books, I paced up and down, I went into the village and talked to the peasants, I smoked fifteen cigars, I tried to sleep ; but at last, at five o'clock, I stood before my neighbour's door.

“ Here I will pause,” he continued, as he broke off his narrative, which he had so far prosecuted with much earnestness. “ My impressions in that expedition I was compelled to tell to some one in order to unburden my heart, for they gave me an asphixia like that produced by the scent of many flowers when they are shut up in a room. That night I had no sleep, so I rose and wrote down haphazard, yet with minute detail and fidelity, all that I should have told you had you been there. Take it and read it to-night, and come to me to-morrow early and hear what followed upon it.”

I took the crumpled sheets of

paper and read them by the light of my lamp, but with some difficulty—dear Stephen writes a villainous hand !

And yet there are people who affirm that a man's character may be seen in his handwriting! Is it really so ?





IV.

“**T**HE little fustanella wearer opened the door. This time he did not show me into the summer-house, but led me through a small avenue straight into the house. What a delightful interior! everywhere cleanliness, convenience, and rustic frugality. The tables, sideboard, and chairs were of polished beech; the rugs and window hangings of the textile fabrics of the village. Upon the walls were a few family photographs, on the tables flower vases filled with roses, books, specimens of minerals and metals, with some sea shells;

a few archaic vases of common make, which had probably been dug up in some field, lay on another table. This room situated on the ground-floor was at once the dining and drawing room.

Mr. Anastasius was absorbed in the study of husbandry. He threw aside his book, took off his spectacles, and rose from his easy-chair to receive me. Our conversation, on account of the book which he had been reading, turned at first upon gardening, to the great delight of my neighbour, who showed to my astonished ignorance all the treasures of his learning. The praises which I lavished on his roses, affording him a pretext, he placed the flower vases before us and began to instruct me concerning their nomenclature.

“ ‘ All these kinds are of noble stock ; I brought them all from Europe. Many are very rare, and I obtained them with difficulty, and raised them. This is

Count Cavour, this Augustus; but this, a sweet coloured rose with the rounded form of calyx and beautiful flesh tint, is Adam. Here is the Snowflake, here the Sylph! Ah! I found this, this white one—a little beauty! look at the edge with its blue lines like rays! This is an unknown species, not found in any collection or catalogue. I don't know how it came; my daughter observed it first, and she christened it Amaryllis. I shall send it to Europe to be placed in the catalogue, under the Greek name.'

"Mr. Anastasius went on pointing out a series of named roses, but the one that impressed me was the Amaryllis. My lips unintentionally whispered in syllables this harmonious and very sweet name, and still in the silence of night I repeat and hear the same—Amaryllis! Amaryllis! She has no other name but that for me, and how well it suits her! 'Tis a pity

that I have not the third idyll of Theocritus here to look at.

“At this moment a continual squeak from an adjoining room made me often turn my head towards the closed door. Mr. Anastasius observing me, said smilingly—

“‘My daughter is there at work.’

“‘At work? what kind of work can it be that makes so much noise?’

“‘The loom—she is weaving.’

“And as I looked at him rather puzzled, he rose and gently opened the door. I then saw for the first time in my life that which is now quite unknown among families in my position—namely, a machine for country weaving, looking like the great skeleton of some antediluvian animal. She was sitting on a low seat before it, and a good-looking healthy brunette, in clean holiday costume, stood by her side to assist her.

“As soon as she saw me she

bowed her head, and frankly welcomed me.

“ ‘ If you are looking at a loom for the first time, come nearer.’

“ I went close to it.

“ ‘ Do you wish me to give you a lesson in weaving? This is the woof, this the warp, here is the shuttle, this is the spindle. You see I am well up in the art. What do you say, Maria?’ she said turning to her attendant.

“ ‘ My lady is the best weaver in the village,’ said the girl, raising her voice shrilly.

“ ‘ And after one has complimented you upon your skill and knowledge, may one venture to ask what you are making?’

“ ‘ It is a belt like that which Maria is wearing.’

“ ‘ Which I suppose you will bestow on some country lass.’

“ ‘ No indeed, I want it for myself; I have made myself the entire costume of a peasant girl.’

“ I thought directly how lovely she would look in that picturesque costume—

“ ‘ And when will you wear it ? ’

“ ‘ What is that to you ? ’ she cried with a roguish smile.

“ ‘ The loom will be in its place to-morrow,’ interrupted Mr. Anastasius. ‘ Time flies, and we want three or four hours for the Spring. Come, little clever one, leave your drudgery, and get ready,’ putting on his customary caressing tone of voice.

“ The girl obeyed and rose, took the wools out of her pretty apron, and ran gaily upstairs to the room above. In one minute she returned quite ready. The little witch ! she had certainly prepared all this to enchant me. Where could she have found that pretty straw hat which shadowed her with its broad brim ?

“ We were scarcely ready to start, when something came suddenly into her mind and she ran away at full speed.

“ ‘ Hey ! hey ! where are you going by yourself ? ’ shouted her father.

“ ‘All right—I have forgotten to feed my pigeons,’ she answered, turning round quickly, and scarcely slackening her pace.

“ ‘Let Maria feed them. What manners are these to keep us standing thus?’

“ ‘Come, both into the courtyard—Mr. Stephen,’ turning to me, ‘you have not seen my pigeons—come,’ and with both hands and head she beckoned and invited me.

“ I joyfully obeyed her invitation, and followed her into a barred enclosure. There I saw a wonderfully beautiful sight. About a hundred pigeons, all apparently white, and all tame and petted, flocked around her. Some flew on her shoulders, some on her hands, and took from her the corn which she profusely scattered. Some she caressed, whilst others she drove away—laughing—because they tickled her neck with their bills, whilst she kissed and talked to

the younger ones as if they had been little children.

“What a delicious walk, and how different from that which I took yesterday with deaf Geronimos, one of my uncle’s peasants. Ah! now I begin to understand the country.

“In order to reach the spring, we had to go by a winding path through the midst of mastick trees, and under the shadows of thick pines. The spring is a hole in a rock whence flows water as clear as crystal. It is situated in a defile among a long and picturesque range of gigantic planes. We sat there on the fallen trunk of a tree: above the plane trees the birds were warbling; in the waters beneath, frogs were emulating them.

“‘What harmony!’ said Amaryllis. ‘I must go and bid those triflers be silent.’

“As she walked towards the lake with comical determination, neither her father nor myself could refrain from laughing.

Going to the spring, she began to wash her hands, and we also went near. She then took off her hat and hung it on a bough of a plane tree, and joining her palms under the dripping water, she bent her head down, and began to drink from them.

“ ‘Here’s a charming situation,’ said Mr. Anastasius. ‘You did not remember to bring a glass, although this water pleases me more than any other water in our village.’

“She raised her head. On account of her stooping position the blood had mounted to her face, and rosy red as she was, with chin and cheeks bathed with moisture, she looked more fresh and lovely than ever.

“ ‘Accept this cup,’ she said to her father, holding to him her palms filled with water, with such bewitching grace that he did not hesitate a moment, but emptied them forthwith.

“ ‘Umph! I am weary,’ he said. ‘This is not a cup for

water, but for a cordial,' and he laughed at his own jest upon the smallness of his daughter's hands.

“ ‘Thanks! But how can Mr. Stephen drink?’ he said, as he suddenly turned to me as if to apologize.

“ ‘Bah! bah! from the same cup,’ she said, with childlike simplicity. ‘Since we have no other, he will excuse it.’

“ And she held out to me her fair palms full of the clear water.

“ I paused. This was too much! Drink water out of her hands! almost touch them with my lips! It would be audacity—insolence! If she had the indiscretion to offer, must I therefore accept it, and become a participant in aught so unseemly?

“ Mr. Anastasius saw my hesitation, but either he did not understand, or pretended not to divine the cause of it.

“ ‘Drink if you are thirsty,’ he said; ‘you are afraid to fatigue her, but it will give her a lesson

so that on another occasion she will not forget the glass.'

"What could I do? I bowed my head down, and, with as much delicacy as possible, sipped the running water. But I suddenly felt my feet trembling, and my senses whirled as if I had drunk, not water, but the strongest spirits. I did not dare repeat the draught.

" 'I thank you much,' I said; 'the water is delicious, the cup most charming, and the cup-bearer perfect; but I am not thirsty.'

" 'I do not care to go back the same way,' she said, with pretty petulance, as she tied the red ribbons of her hat under her chin. 'Let us return by the seashore.'

" 'But you know it is further.'

" 'What is that to me?—and you, father, are a great walker.'

" 'But Mr. Stephen here is unaccustomed to such roads.'

" 'Oh, that is good!—unaccustomed! My father thinks you

are some old man,' she cried, addressing herself to me, and looking into my face as if to assure herself of the contrary.

“ ‘ Do not be disquieted about me,’ I hastened to say. ‘ We will go by the seashore ; it will be better to see a different road.’

“ Amaryllis gaily preceded us, and was never tired. Just like a kid, she liked all the irregularities of the path, and often dashed off from the straight and trodden way to find a hillock to climb, or a slope to run down ; she had acquired the accomplishment of walking without sliding over the slippery leaves of the pines, which were strewn all over the ground, whilst I with all my steady gait was twice or thrice very nearly falling, to her extreme delight.

“ How beautiful was this road by the sea ! The waves had wasted and eaten away the hill, which, thus cleft by the anger of the ocean, showed heights rugged and of a reddish colour, and thus

looked like the mountain's gaping and bleeding wounds. There were some tall pines on the very brink, and the roots of many of them no longer found a support in the wasted soil, but hung over, condemned to certain death, whilst others, which had already fallen, lay cold and dry on the flints and rocks below.

“Amaryllis, whilst exploring the shore's winding path, suddenly uttered a cry of joy, as if she had found something very precious, which she stooped to pick up. Turning round, she ran back to us, holding some blue thick-leaved flowers in her hands.

“‘Amaranths in blossom!’ she cried. ‘How delightful! I can gather as many as I like!’

“‘What will you do with them?’ asked the father.

“‘Bah! I want them; they are useful to me.’ And with charming defiance, as it were, she struck her right fist into the palm of her left hand. ‘You sit

there, under the rock with Mr. Stephen, so that the wind does not blow on you,' she observed ironically, 'whilst I pick a quantity of them.'

" 'If you will let me, I also will help,' I said.

" 'Listen to that—If I let! Come with me!'

" Whilst her father sat on the rock, according to her advice, only impressing upon her in an exhorting voice not to let night overtake us on account of the amaranths, I followed her, and we began the collection. By degrees we wandered further and further from the place where Mr. Anastasius was sitting, and we saw him no longer.

" For one moment I reflected on the oddity of my unprecedented employment, and laughed out, without intending it.

" 'What are you laughing at?' she asked earnestly.

" 'If any gipsy had told me this time last year, that on the same day one year afterwards I

should be plucking amaranths on a lonely seashore in Greece, it would have appeared to me so impossible, that I should have kicked her down stairs. And yet——'

"I had offended her. She gave me one glance, and then bent down her head again.

" 'So it seems to you a ridiculous thing for any one to gather amaranths! You are right—we will go—my father awaits us.'

"I was heartily sorry, and repented my foolish words, if they were the cause of offence; but I felt so overcome that I could not offer her any explanations—none. I had gathered a good many amaranths, and I gave them to her. She uttered one cold, dry 'Thank you,' as she put the amaranths along with her own. After she had walked on two or three steps, she threw them all into the sea together.

" 'Back with empty hands?'

asked Mr. Anastasius, much surprised. ‘How about the amaranths?’

“ ‘There was a wasp on them,’ she answered gravely, ‘and so that it should not sting me, I flung the whole of them into the sea.’

“She had lost all her cheerfulness, and walked near her father, silent and sad. Was this really my doing? For a worthless jest to disturb the joy and gaiety of a good girl! In return for all the graceful and well-bred kindness which she had so readily accorded me, I had shown myself more rough than the commonest peasant. What a beautiful impression she would have of me. Yet in her was my happiness, and in her my idyllic dreams were fulfilled!

“But still, I must control myself, and affect a cheerful and pleasant demeanour. If Mr. Anastasius should perceive this sudden change in both of us, what might he not infer? Per-

haps something most remote from the truth, and if so, alas! he might think that I was the most audacious man in the world. I therefore intentionally introduced a discussion on politics, that thus he might be justified in not conversing with his daughter; and I maintained my opinions, which were opposed to his, with so much tenacity that the discourse lasted till dinner time. Fortunately he was not provoked to anger, although I must needs confess, that I raised my voice twice or thrice as if I were arguing in another presence than that of himself and daughter, and was back again in the charming society of my uncle's steward and deaf Geronimos.

“The dinner was not sumptuous, but appetizing and choice, yet what pleasure could it have for me when *she* only addressed three or four words to me—the simple politenesses of a refined hostess? Confessedly I had

appetite enough, and Mr. Anastasius was not behindhand; but his daughter ate so very little, that at last the anxious eyes of the father rested upon her.

“ ‘What is the matter to-night? You have lost all your appetite, you who are usually so hungry.’

“ ‘Nothing. I have a slight headache,’ she answered gloomily.

“ Mr. Anastasius took her hand uneasily.

“ ‘Don’t distress yourself, dear,’ she said, actually smiling. ‘I have no fever, it is only my customary megrim—it will be gone by the morning.’

“ My position was irksome. How could I show that I believed in this assumed indisposition? It would be clear hypocrisy before her, and would be misunderstood. I tried to catch her glance, that she might read in my eyes my repentance and my sorrow, but she purposely avoided looking at me. I was

perforce compelled to behave like a senseless idiot.

“We had scarcely finished dinner, when Amaryllis rose.

“‘Pray excuse me,’ she said, and in her voice a little bitterness was manifest. ‘I will leave you now, for I must go to rest; my headache is insupportable. Good-night,’ and coldly and stiffly she extended her hand, and just touched mine with the tips of her fingers—whilst I whispered, ‘I have offended you—I don’t remember any cause.’

“We drank two or three glasses of muscadel, sitting out in the moonlight. I did not consult my watch, but in a short time begged that my horse might be got ready; and Mr. Anastasius fortunately did not offer to detain me: he only said—

“‘So far as safety is concerned, any one can pass the night in the wood quite unarmed, so you need have no uneasiness; but I will send my keeper with

you in order that you may not lose your way.'

" 'Thanks, do not trouble yourself; I know the way. What need is there to tire the man?'

" 'Pooh, pooh! it is his duty to do night-service. Stamatos,' he cried to the small servant, 'bid Karamasas attend the gentleman.'

" 'When I was ready to go, and had thanked Mr. Anastasius for his attentions, he said as he wrung my hand—

" 'In sooth I am delighted with you, and am sorry we cannot see you to-morrow; but you see it is Saturday, so I must go into the town, for I have not sold last year's corn, and I want to get my barns ready for the new harvest. But yet you will come on Sunday morning to our church?'

" 'And seeing me hesitate—

" 'Make no objection to it because I have not paid you a visit. Here we dispense with the cus-

tomary formalities, so I shall expect you.'

"I returned at a quick pace, the keeper following me, and very soon I was shut up in my room and alone."

Two or three sheets of paper at this point were so badly written that I was not able to decipher one word.

"My determination is made : on Sunday I shall go to the town, after I have paid a formal visit to Mr. Anastasius to say that I have had a telegram from my uncle instructing me to transact some business there. I shall remain in the town till four o'clock, when the steamer arrives, and then I shall go back to Athens, after writing to my neighbour to say that a sudden obligation prevents me from keeping my previous engagement.

"How did this day begin, and how has it ended ! I have played with happiness like a gambler ! I won so much during the first few hours—and then lost all at

once! Closing my eyes, I recalled in succession all that had occurred, crowded and heaped one upon another—in one day, events, so many—all so unforeseen, yet how delightful! ‘*What the moment offers comes not again with the years.*’ To whom better than myself could this proverb be applied!

“Amid all these scenes—through every thought—one sweet form glided, and two eyes, bright as the stars, illumined my room, and regarded me sternly and reproachfully. Oh, Amaryllis!—for thou hast no other name for me—Amaryllis! wood nymph! enchantress! was I predestined to leave society and come into this retirement to bear a twofold subjugation—first from thy singular simplicity and unparalleled grace, and next from thy contemptuous displeasure?”

Among these sheets there were some written in a style of absurd exaltation, in which the psycho-

logical storm in Stephen was possibly blended with Mr. Anastasius's wine, which is not celebrated for its weakness.

I consider that those feelings which are suddenly kindled, and give out flame and noise like fireworks, and then in a short time turn to dust and ashes, are supremely ridiculous. But in this account I express my strong conviction that the feelings of my friend, although quickly roused, were justifiable, and were the infallible result of the position in which he found himself; and I believe that whoever had been similarly placed would have suffered as he did, or worse. The only comical part of it was his idea of leaving, and the melodramatic air which brought out somewhat of the tragic element and then after a few clouds of anger gave way to a sweet atmosphere. But Stephen does not seem strong in his knowledge of the meteorology of love.

Thus thinking, I fell asleep

and dreamt of that vivid scene where Amaryllis held out to my fortunate friend her palms full of water. What a lovely subject for a painter !





V.

EARLY, very early, I went to Stephen's. "Do you know, friend," I said, that your tale has cost me my peace of mind? You awoke my curiosity, and then last night at the most critical point left off. Give me the conclusion as briefly as possible."

"I rose in the morning with bloodshot eyes. A sleep like a lethargy had seized me—so much so, that the steward delayed awakening me lest I might be unwell. The antithesis of the whole of yesterday had surprised and irritated me. A peasant came to ask me to draw up a

petition for him, and I spoke in so disagreeable a manner that he took it up and ran away like a drenched cat. About noon a man brought me a letter from my uncle, and some Athenian newspapers. These occupied me for some hours. I read them all through, from the leading articles to the last advertisements, a thing which I never do, but I wanted to kill time. It being necessary to write to my uncle, I sat down and wrote him very lengthily on the natural beauties of the place, upon the peasants, upon the prospects of a good harvest, many complimentary remarks upon Mr. Anastasius, but about his daughter—nothing. With a suspicion so common in the like cases, I feared lest, if I only said one word, my uncle would guess the whole. I wrote, in conclusion, that I should return without fail on the Wednesday. When this business was over I took a little to eat, and then shut myself in my room. Over

the window there were still the roses which had been given to me twenty-four hours ago. When I returned last evening I had given them no attention, so they had remained shut up with me all night, which might account for my heavy sleep. I looked at them and saw that they had faded away — they drooped over the earthen vase in which I had placed them. I went to them, but had scarcely touched them, when the petals all fell off, and were scattered. The vase was cracked, and the water had dried up. They had blossomed for one day—only one day—they and my happiness alike ; and while my heart was torn with anguish, I saw passing before me all the pictures of my past joys. There first in the summer-house, when she made so charming an impression on me with her roses and cherries ; then, when she was weaving at her loom ; then, when she fed her pigeons ; then, when she gave me water to drink ; and

lastly, the catastrophe when she threw the amaranths into the sea !

“ Before sunset I ordered my horse. I mounted and tore through the wood. I longed for the air, for the open country, and I let the horse carry me whither it would. When I reached the wide, extended plain, I galloped frantically along, the horse’s sides bleeding from my spurs and foaming all over. What had the horse done ? Nothing ; but I wanted something upon which to vent myself. As I sped on, cutting through the air and feeling the fresh breeze upon my brow, I derived good therefrom—a great good. Without being aware, I found myself, by a strange coincidence, at ‘The Well’ and under the plane trees. I dismounted, and then for the first time was conscious to what a state I had brought my poor beast. It was sweating and bleeding, and it trembled ! I pitied it much, and walked it

about to cool it and until the perspiration ceased. Afterwards I went and drank some water—this time out of my own hands! I had no heart to leave the place; it seemed as if somewhat belonging to her must linger there—some of her beauty and grace—and wheresoever I turned my eyes I saw her as yesterday by my side. Suddenly I beheld something white upon the ground. At first I thought it was a little stone; I kicked it with my foot, and found that it was paper. Paper in this solitary place! Not many about here use it—perhaps it had fallen from my own pocket. I stooped down, picked it up, and opened it; it was written upon with pencil, in an unknown, delicate, and feminine hand. I was not long in discovering that it was in the handwriting of Amaryllis, and that she must have dropped it there the day before. It had for title ‘The Reaper,’ and there were verses beneath. The first lines were those that

I heard her sing in the garden,
but the conclusion also was here.
Listen to them—they are worth
your trouble :

“ ‘ Blow, sweet breeze of morning !
Come, refresh me now ;
And, sun, delay thy coming,
Lest thou burn black my brow.

‘ The heavy wheat-ears bowing,
For the waving sickle stay ;
’Tis harvest in the country,
The threshing-floors are gay.

‘ Although a busy maiden
Each one her loom now leaves,
I have a toiling father,
And must gather in the sheaves.

‘ With my keen, shining sickle
I cut the golden grain ;
With one glance at the dancing
I glean me many a swain.’

“ It seemed to me that she had
met with these lines somewhere,
and had copied them. I kissed
the precious paper and hid it,
and for one moment felt as if
all my troubles were gone.

“ Do you ask what I did as I
was returning ? Why, I lost my

way, and if I had not met a peasant I must have passed the whole night in the wood. It was almost night when I reached the tower, and there I found what I had in nowise expected, namely, a card of Mr. Anastasius's with a line on it signifying that he should expect me at the church in the morning. 'Very well,' I said to myself, 'I will be there, and make my last visit, and to-morrow at dinner-time take my leave of the woods, and the hills, and the Amaryllides.' What had occurred had made me stoical. I ate with a diabolical appetite, and told the steward quite calmly that I intended to leave on the morrow. He opened his little eyes as wide as possible, and looked at me to see if he had heard aright. I explained that having business of my uncle's to transact in the town, it was necessary. When he understood it so far, he began to say how sorry he was, and so forth. I slept wonderfully well,

and without dreaming. Early in the morning I rose, and throwing on my clothes, got my port-manteau ready for my journey, and told the steward to order horses after dinner.

“ I went on foot to the church, or rather the chapel belonging to Mr. Anastasius. It is small, very white and clean, and beautifully decorated inside, but the exterior resembles a peasant’s cottage except that it has a cross on the chimney, and a bell hanging at the side. Inside it was full of women with their veils on.

“ *She* stood among them at her devotions. The men were assembled outside, as there was no room within, and Mr. Anastasius sat uncovered on a wooden bench. I greeted him and exchanged a few words. It seemed as if she had heard my voice, for she gave me one glance, and just bowing her head continued her devotions.

“ You know I am not much esteemed for my piety, but the calm here was so different from

the bustle that is observable in the churches of our metropolis; and true faith was so visible in the faces of these simple parishioners, that this, joined to the freshness of Nature around, made me follow the Divine office with a sense of gratitude and a fervour similar to that, when long ago, I as a boy read the Epistles in our parish church. The service was concluded, the countrymen had partaken of the Antidoron, and dispersed; and at length, last of all, Amaryllis was preparing to leave—after she had spoken to all the peasants, and kissed and caressed all the children, as she had fondled her pigeons on the previous day.

“Imagine my perplexity and agitation when I saw her approaching me with a smile, and when she gave me her hand with cordiality. No anger—no coldness—not a shadow of resentment on her countenance, which beamed on me as clear as the heavens!

“ ‘ Good day ; how do you like my little church ? ’ she said. ‘ I arranged it all. I made the sketch for the building. Come in—what are you afraid of, as if you were a lost soul ! ’

“ And she led me by the hand into the church, and showed me the eikons and tapers.

“ ‘ I chose them all,’ she whispered, as if she feared to disturb the holy quiet of the church. ‘ Look at that silver eikon—it is Saint Katherine, the church is named after her—it was the name of my mother.’ Her voice changed as she uttered those last words.

“ ‘ Katherine,’ I said, ‘ was the name of my own mother.’

“ She looked at me with much sympathy as she said, ‘ Then your mother too is not alive,’ and she uttered these words in a tone which seemed to imply—‘ You know what it means when any one says—I have no mother.’

“ ‘ Come here, and I’ll show you her grave, and that of my

sister ; they are just behind the church.'

"Under the shade of five or six cypress trees, close to each other, were the two graves of her mother and sister ; very simple, covered with grass and flowers, and their only ornament a marble cross. The sister's bore her name, Helena, and on each cross I saw hanging—a wreath of amaranths. Unwittingly I started. She observed it, guessed the cause, and her eyes kindled as she said in tones the sweetness which wrung my heart, 'Is it in sooth, Mr. Stephen, so very foolish to gather amaranths ?'

"What answer could I make. I became as red as a criminal, and lowered my eyes.

"So the good girl wished for some amaranths to adorn the graves of her mother and sister ! Now that I knew this, I justified both her anger and her grief. I had pierced her to the quick.

"I endeavoured to compensate by showing a hearty repentance,

but did not meanly venture to allude to it again to Amaryllis in our morning conversation in the charming summer-house, or in our walk in the well-laid-out garden, which lasted until nine ; while Mr. Anastasius with much animation shared our gaiety, and was almost angry when I said I must go before the heat prevented.

“ Is it needful to say that, as thought no more of going away, it would have been absurd therefore to mention anything of my previous intencion to my neighbour ? What could I then have done, but go—will he, nill he—or else become a laughing-stock, which latter alternative I should without any doubt have preferred ! On the other hand, how different was the girl’s behaviour : to change thus in a few hours—and when I expected winter, I meet fair spring. I could not explain this !

“ Imagine the surprise of the steward when he saw me put my

clothes back into their places, and when I told him that I was not going to leave, without giving him any explanation upon it. He went out on the balcony, and as I saw his right hand moving about, I think he was crossing himself!

“After that day, whole weeks passed without anything unusual occurring. As when the source of many rivers creates a cataract which rushes down noisily and turbid, yet after a time clearing itself flows calmly through the plains, so after those first unquiet days my life passed along in peaceful serenity. I went every day to Mr. Anastasius, sometimes even twice a day, and dined there two or three times. Whilst the monotony of the country had at first wearied me, this same monotony now equally delighted me, and I only desired that each succeeding day should be like the one that preceded it. I soon began in a minor way to make myself acquainted with all the

charms of rustic life. I got to know the peasants and talked to them about my uncle's estate, about agricultural improvements, and by degrees my interest was aroused. I made little excursions to fields where the corn was ripe, and reaping begun ; where maize plantations were being dug ; in fact I busied myself in all the work of the estate, to the steward's great annoyance.

“The truth is, that my constant intercourse with my neighbour, who imparted to me his experience and knowledge, caused the peasants some surprise at my learning, which they began to respect. In this way, and in reading good books, either of my own or some lent to me by my neighbour, those hours were pleasantly passed which it was not possible for me to spend with Amaryllis.


“But the hours spent with her—these were hours of real happiness. Every day revealed some new feature, some new

charm in her exceptional character. As I knew her better, she gave me the impression of absolute perfection! You have noticed in works of art, how, if they are but *mediocre*, they may possibly delight us at first, but when we have looked upon them for long, we are tired, we are weary of them, and then begin to observe faults in detail. In the works of the greatest artists, on the contrary, the longer we study them the more we find in them something new, and so understand and admire them more and more. It is the same in the different works of Nature, and Amaryllis is one of her most perfect works!





VI.

“BOUT this time there occurred an unpleasant incident which interfered with this agreeable monotony, and which for a short time threatened to bring about a tragical conclusion. For the sake of the public safety, a detachment of military, under the command of a sub-lieutenant of foot, visited the commune. This detachment, as might be expected, came to our estates, and was to be quartered for one night on Mr. Anastasius—according to custom. The men were distributed among the homes of the peasantry, but the officer was destined to re-

ceive the hospitality of the proprietor of the estate. This officer was young and handsome, which is rather unusual, but his martial assumptions, inspired one with antipathy directly he spoke. I was dining that evening with my neighbour, and despised him at once on account of his boastful accounts of successes against malcontents, and his exploits whilst pursuing them, together with his combats, and suchlike.

“Yet I saw with sadness that Amaryllis paid attention to the foolish sallies of this officer, and that she cast frequent glances at his gold braid and glittering buttons. What would you? No matter how intellectual, how witty a girl may be, she always admires a military uniform.

“For since woman is by nature timid, she is much attracted in consequence by martial parade. The officer noticed the unconventionality of the girl, and, emboldened by her naïve manners, began a systematic attack—as if

he were engaged in the pursuit of malcontents.

“ Her father did not observe this ; but I, who had a keen scent wherever Amaryllis was concerned, was exasperated that this fellow had come to spoil our peace and our delightful intercourse with each other. I at last, too, began to get jealous, and watched him well, and understood all by his physiognomy. I noticed also another circumstance, which was, that whilst Amaryllis seemed entirely absorbed in the tales of this young knight, she scarcely turned once in the whole course of the evening to look at me ! It is needless to tell you that on that night, all the insects resident in the tower, which I thought I had effectually quelled, suddenly reappeared, and never left me, but tormented me until the morning.

“ The officer maintained a regular siege. Excusing himself on the ground that he was awaiting orders to march, he

established himself at Mr. Anastasius's with the most total want of consideration, nor made any attempt to leave. My neighbour was not long before he observed the schemes of this swashbuckler, and I saw with delight that he kept his eye upon him. Whether he spoke to his daughter on the subject, or whether, with womanly acuteness, although at first somewhat deceived, she at last discerned his true worth, certain it is that her accustomed style of charming familiarity was suddenly laid aside, and that before him she carried herself with cold haughtiness, and with almost an imperious air. It was quite needful for her at this juncture to cast aside the simple character of a country girl, and to assume the manners of a woman of the great world; and this second part became her as well as the first. Possibly because her complaisance had so charmed me, she seemed in my eyes invested with queenly dig-

nity when she drew up her proud head, contemptuously curled her lip, and looked abstracted, whilst the sub-lieutenant was following up his unremitting attentions.

“ Yet it seems he was not altogether content with his progress, and that not expecting a surrender, he was waiting for an opportunity to make a dashing assault. The opportunity he sought, was not long in coming. One day Amaryllis said, as soon as she saw me—

“ ‘ Oh, Mr. Stephen, another hen gone! my poor Levke and her twelve chickens.’

“ ‘ What! are they killed? ’

“ ‘ No, a fox has eaten them. It is dreadful that we cannot keep our fowls.’

“ ‘ Madam,’ cried the officer, interrupting our conversation, ‘ I will straightway desist from the pursuit of the malcontents, and begin this day to hunt foxes. This very night I promise you the first,’ and he raised his hand

above his head as if he made a vow to heaven.

“Naturally, Amaryllis was pleased with his energy, but said, although somewhat coldly, that it was not worth while troubling him. Mr. Anastasius also tried to deter him, assuring him that the pursuit of foxes would occupy him for a whole year.

“But he could not believe this; therefore they were unwillingly obliged to accept his offer, for how could such attention and knightly devotion be repulsed?

“That evening after dinner he was constituted general in the impending attack, in which two other officers were to join. I had no inclination for this night excursion, but I knew in what light that kind of parade appears to women; and as I did not care to seem either timid before Amaryllis, or inferior in hunting dexterity to the sub-lieutenant—or still less to be superseded by him, I offered myself as a volun-

teer in this onslaught of sportsmen, and thus we made five persons in all.

“Our leader at dinner-time explained his plan of attack, which was to be by a decoy. We were to take with us a hen, which was to be tied to the trunk of a tree, with a long string fastened to her leg. We were to hide near among the bushes; we were then to pull the cord attached to the hen’s foot, so as to make her scream out, which, the fox hearing, it would infallibly run to the spot, and then—we could shoot it! This plan very much amused the daughter, and the officer began thereupon to calculate eagerly on a final success. He had so far succeeded with Amaryllis, that if he had not excited esteem or love, he had certainly won interest, and womanly curiosity; and he had made her so attentive a listener that evening, that I was ready to burst with rage. ‘Ugh!’ I said, ‘women are all alike—foolish and vain!’ Alas!

had I not thought that Amaryllis was not like others—that *she* achieved perfection! I, with delicacy and nobility of feeling, with my silent love and consideration, I am cast aside: boldness, impudence is needed—these please her, and I am rejected for these. . . . Let her then rejoice over her knight!

“It was now ten o’clock, and the sub-lieutenant was disposed to abandon his trifling, in order to make ready for the sporting excursion. We were sitting in the stone-paved courtyard; the evening was most delicious. The lieutenant went to his room, and came back shortly, armed to the teeth, as if he were going after hippopotami instead of foxes. He wore a hunting-belt round his waste, had a double-barrelled gun slung over his shoulders, and held in his hand a revolver, which at that moment he was filling.

“Amaryllis had never seen a revolver, and out of curiosity

went near to observe its mechanism.

“The officer was possibly a little giddy on account of our host’s excellent wine, of which he had partaken in good draughts that evening, and it might be was also a little bewildered by the proximity of the beautiful girl, who thoughtlessly stooped her face too close to his, the better to understand the revolver, which he held carelessly, as he showed her the different parts. Forgetting that there was a cartridge in the deadly weapon, he suddenly touched the trigger, when the revolver went off in front of her head.

“Frightened at the report, and blinded by the flash, the girl clasped both her hands to her face, and fell ; whilst the unhappy father, thinking she was killed, ejaculated, ‘ My child ! ’ and sank fainting off his chair.

“Imagine the scene ! All lost themselves, and I hardly know how I found the power myself at

that moment—without consulting any one, and unknowing whether she was alive or dead—to raise her, and clasping her in my arms carry her into the house. With difficulty I succeeded in withdrawing her hands from her face, where she still held them tightly pressed, and then I saw that there was neither wound, nor any burn beyond a portion of her hair that was singed. I seized some cold water, and sprinkled her with it; she revived, and pressing my hand, with eyes still half closed, murmured :

“ ‘ Father ! ’

“ ‘ It is not your father,’ I said, and my voice trembled.

“ ‘ You ? Mr. Stephen ! how good you are !—but my father ! my father ! ’ she cried excitedly.

“ See how it is when we are suffering. Amid all our fears we remember that others whom we love are also in anguish ! Happily, Mr. Anastasius had now risen, and was approaching his daughter. He embraced her

fondly, and kissing her over and over again, wept for joy at finding her alive and unhurt.

“Outside, there was now a great tumult, for the report had gone through the village, and all the villagers, aroused out of sleep, rushed to see what had happened to their mistress. Some said she was dead, others that she was wounded. The women had begun to weep, and make funeral wails. The men were enraged against the officer, and the more valiant came armed, shouting out that they were going to slay the murderer of their good mistress !

“But the prudent lieutenant had shut himself up in his room. His position at this juncture was not a very pleasant one.

“When they were quite assured that their mistress was safe, they departed and returned to their homes ; and we—the father, daughter, and myself—remained alone. Mr. Anastasius having recovered from his agita-

tion, sat with his daughter's head upon his knees. When I saw her suffering in her head on account of the flash and flame, I took on myself the part of a doctor, and laid wet cloths on her forehead. As I changed the moistened linen, she opened her eyes for a moment, and gave me one look of such heartfelt thanks, that I was well repaid for my small pains. Father and daughter had both been so upset that they could not be persuaded to go to bed that night, in consequence of which I remained, nor returned to the tower until just before dawn. I did not wish to leave at all, but both of them urged me to go for the sake of having some rest, and therefore with sadness I felt myself compelled to obey. All that had occurred, however, in this terrible night was so vividly impressed on my mind, that I was unable to close my eyes. Early in the morning, I took horse and hastened to see how Amaryllis was. I found

them in the garden ; both herself and her father welcomed me more heartily than ever. She seemed quite well, and entirely recovered, but somewhat pale from the shock, and a little changed in appearance, as she had cut off the singed hair round her forehead.

“ She told me that Pappas Zacharias, the parish priest of the village, had that morning offered up a thanksgiving in the church for her preservation from the danger which had threatened her. She also added how grateful she herself felt, as it had been a means of showing how much the people in the village loved her. As she said this, she gave me a look as if she wished me to infer that I too was included among the members of the village.

“ Not a word was said of the officer, except that when I inquired about him, Mr. Anastasius said that he had left a short time previously, pretending that

he had received sudden orders to march ; when Amaryllis observed, with a smile—

“ ‘Now that we are by ourselves and all quiet again, we will go one day to the cave of the Enchantress.’ ”

I looked at my watch ; it was ten o'clock.

“ I cannot help telling you, Stephen,” I said resolutely, “ that your tale is told very well indeed, and that you draw your listener on and on with your interminable prattle ; but recollect that I have affairs in hand which for your sake I put off to-day, but this cannot be done to-morrow : so finish quickly, for the end must be near—you have quarrelled, you go away—everything has been done as it always happens ! But why did you go to the cave of the Enchantress ? I think that quite superfluous ! ”

“ Why ? ”

“ The cave of the Enchantress as far as you were concerned, for

a time at least, was Mr. Anastasius's house."

Stephen laughed, but immediately repenting having so committed himself, heaved a sigh.

"That is true!" he said, and resumed his narrative:—

"After some days, my neighbour sent to me one morning to say that he should expect me to dinner, and that after dinner he proposed to make the long-talked-of excursion. The cave is on the highest point of the hill in the centre of the wood; and its great open mouth, hidden behind mastic trees, might be taken for the mouth of some monster lying in wait for travellers.

"Amaryllis was not very cheerful during the walk that day. Since the revolver affair there was something—a little something in her manner that showed a tinge either of gravity or sadness. When I told her that as she fell senseless in the courtyard, I took her in my arms,

and carried her indoors, she had blushed, and averted her eyes. Since that time, although she had never ceased to be well-mannered, and gracious, yet she behaved towards me with somewhat of the same haughtiness which I had noticed in her carriage to the officer. Sometimes also she twisted my simplest words into a plea for offence, and sometimes was even angry for imaginary causes. After that first lesson, however, about the amaranths, I shunned every pretext for being angry myself, and managed pretty well; either by pretending not to comprehend her, or by turning the matter into a jest, I contrived to bring back peace. One day especially, when something had annoyed her on the morning previous, she said—

“ ‘To day you are indeed Stephen¹—but yesterday——’

“ ‘What was I yesterday?’

¹ A play on his name Stephen—
Στέφανος = a crown or wreath.

“ ‘ Well—yesterday—you were a crown of thorns ? ’ ”

“ By this you may judge of her temper. Shall I tell you the mistake I made about her. I had hitherto always mistrusted books with gorgeous bindings, and women who were very beautiful externally, and thought that with both one and the other, I should be sure to find some silliness within. Why should I have said so, when both Homer and Shakespere are often presented in very handsome editions ! ”

“ The entrance to the cave is low and dark, and like the pit of Hell : one must stoop down to go in. Mr. Anastasius had no wish to do so, so he sat outside. ”

“ ‘ Perhaps you are afraid to go in ? ’ she asked, ironically. ”

“ ‘ No ! not quite that—but I don’t know whether it is worth the trouble. ’ ”

“ ‘ It is worth it over and over again. Help me to light the taper. ’ ”

“ She held in her little hand a taper and matches. She lighted it and went in first—I followed her. I can’t tell whether it was the cold of the interior, or any other cause, but I felt a shiver run through me as I found myself opposite to her in that dark place, with only the glimmer of one taper.

“ ‘Now I’ll tell you, in a few words, the story of the cave as it is told by the old women in the village. In the olden time a witch lived here—not an old one like the witches in fairy tales, but one who was young and lovely. The only witchcraft she employed was to bewitch all the girls of the village so that they became ugly—and by her own beauty to captivate all the young men. On account of the many evils she wrought thereby, the mothers in the village cursed her; and at last found a monk—a holy man—who prayed to God to save the village from a witch who made the girls so ugly, and

the youths so infatuated. And God heard him, and sent an earthquake, and the cave was so shaken that a large piece fell off the rock, and buried the witch. There—now come with me,' and she led me into the depths of the cave.

"I believe that the most foolish and credulous of the villagers would not have felt such emotion at this recital as myself at that time. As I looked in silence at the rock which according to the legend had buried the fair witch, Amaryllis, affecting a mysterious manner, said :

" 'Give me your hand; I shall extinguish the taper.'

"She put out the light. We were in utter darkness. I only felt her little soft hand in mine. I heard her breathing; and inhaled the sweet scent of the violets in her hair.

" 'I am sure you are afraid,' she said, suddenly, as she led me still farther into the dark-

ness. ‘ Shall I rekindle the taper ? ’

“ ‘ Not because I am afraid,’ I said, laughing outright.

“ ‘ But how your hand trembles, and it is quite cold ! ’

“ ‘ It is the damp chill of the cave.’

“ ‘ No, no ! it is because the place is enchanted. Now you’ll see what you have to bear. Do you not hear something ? Listen ! ’

“ ‘ I hear a dropping on the stones.’

“ ‘ What do you suppose it to be ? ’

“ ‘ What ? why the dropping of water.’

“ ‘ No ! they are the tears which are always running from the eyes of the Enchantress ; and such eyes ! you will see them shine through the darkness like stars. Why ! your hand trembles still more — now are you really afraid, or are you not ashamed to say so ? ’

“ And the fact is, that two

stars did shine out of the rock, but I was not long in discovering that they were holes through which shone the light of day.

“ ‘The witch is down there, under the rock, but is alive. She is always weeping, and she looks forth with her beautiful starry eyes to behold some youth who is to come into the cave. If she succeeds in enchanting him, he will be so inspired that he will touch the rock, which will then immediately turn round and overshadow him, and the witch will be saved. Come now, touch the rock. Has not the Enchantress inspired you? What an insensible man!’

“ ‘That cave is certainly enchanted! My senses began to waver, my heart beat violently; it was almost on my lips to say that I was not insensible—and God knows what else—when, suddenly she released my hand and went forward. I thought she had ascended somewhere. When she spoke again her voice

assumed an air of authority, as she said :

“ ‘Touch the rock—the witch will rise again.’ ”

“ Hardly being aware of what I was doing, I struck my palm on the rock, and stepped back some paces awestruck, and blinded with the sudden light which filled the cave, as if a miracle had actually occurred ; and amid this light of day I just discerned her as she stood erect on a stone. To frighten me she had wound her knitted shawl round her head, and its black shadows made the colours of her complexion more vivid and the brilliancy of her eyes to shine forth brighter than the imaginary eyes of the witch.

“ ‘I owe you my life,’ she said, in imperial style, as if she had really been the risen Enchantress.

“ I knew her, but could not as yet understand how she had contrived the sudden lighting up of the cave.

“ ‘I thank you for your munifi-

cence,' I cried, bending my knee almost to the ground.

"She jumped down, laughing immoderately.

" 'Ah, I cannot keep it up any longer! Confess that I played my part splendidly, and that you were terribly afraid when I shifted the stone and let in the light.'

" 'I do not deny it,' I said, 'but it was not abject fear.'

" 'Did you not think for a moment that the Enchantress had really arisen?'

" 'I think so still,' said I, as I looked in her face.

" 'Oh, oh! we are going to have some romantic extravagance! But now we'll go to my father—the poor man must be tired of waiting for us.'

"My excellent neighbour was quietly smoking his cigar. He laughed when with many a charm his daughter told him how she had frightened me; and he explained that there is a hole above the cave which is entirely closed by one stone. This hole

was probably made by the shepherds when they took refuge there in former times, and served them for a window.





VII.

“**I** HAD been away from Athens more than a month, and did not talk now about returning. I stuck to my hermitage like an oyster to its rock; in no way concerned about any other world outside my uncle's and Mr. Anastasius's estates. My uncle was quite enthusiastic upon finding that the country pleased me, and did not desire me to return, but wrote to inform me that I could stay there the whole summer, and see to the harvesting of the wheat and maize; and I assure you I did not reject his offer. Ah, how beautiful was

that time ! How it has all passed away like a dream ! The peasants had begun the harvest, and the villages were empty, because when the villagers leave for harvesting they shut up their cottages and dwell in the fields, taking with them not only their families but their animals also. The harvest is a lovely spectacle, especially when the girls are reaping, enveloped like ghosts in white veils to protect them against becoming sunburnt. You ought to see with what skill and grace they cut the golden ears ; and how they first make the lesser sheaves, then the pile, and then lastly bind and load.

“ We had much enjoyment during harvest-time. We roamed from field to field, but always either on my uncle’s or Mr. Anastasius’s estate. My uncle’s peasants, in their enthusiasm, asked me to subscribe my name as a dweller in the commune, so that they might one day make me their deputy. Amaryllis, in

accordance with that name which suits her better than her own, did not confine herself to looking at those who were reaping, but herself took a sickle and joined the rustics in their labours. One day when she had been reaping a long time, she showed she well knew she deserved payment for her fatigue, for without losing time she reclined on the ground beneath a plane tree, and partook heartily of the reapers' food, which was—what think you?—barley bread and new cheese.

“As we were returning home one evening after a reaping excursion, I hardly know what induced me, but I said, ‘Now you have become a reaper in reality, you should sing me that song.’ She knew what I alluded to, but pretended not to understand me.

“‘What song?’

“‘Blow, sweet breeze of dawning.’

“She looked at me as if surprised, and said, ‘Will you give

me those lines? It was you, then, who took them, when I lost them long ago. Pretty behaviour!’

“I was somewhat offended at her tone.

“‘Excuse me,’ I said, ‘I did not take those lines; I found them at the “well” where you had dropped them. Since I heard you sing them——’

“‘’Tis false—never!’

“‘’Tis most true—on the day when I saw you first, with cherries on your ears, and roses on your head——’

“She coloured deeply.

“‘Did you admire my beautiful croaking voice?’ she whispered.

“‘This modesty is egoistic,’ I replied. ‘You have neither a wonderful, nor a powerful voice; but you sing very sweetly. Will you once again repeat that pretty little song? Do, I entreat you.’

“‘I do not remember the lines. Give them back to me.’

“ ‘ But I wish so much to have them.’

“ ‘ Copy them.’

“ ‘ But they are so neatly written, and I write so badly.’

“ ‘ Then—’ she hesitated, ‘ then—keep mine and give me—your copy.’

“ ‘ Thank you ; this proposal of yours is the best possible arrangement.’

“ The next day I gave her the lines which I had copied as well as I could, but, notwithstanding her promise, she did not care to sing them. One evening, after much persuasion from her father, who wished her to sing a translation he had made from the German, she acquiesced. (I think the ‘ Reaper ’ is also his, but he conceals it from modesty.)

“ Now don’t tell me, friend, that you do not care to hear the lines of this translation. I shall repeat them without asking you.

“ A dew-drop radiant with light said to
a fallen tear,

“ Behold ! low on the earth adown, how
Fate upon thee low’rs ;

Thou art not like to me,—fair Heaven's
daughter without peer,
The sister of the fragrant breeze, com-
panion of the flow'rs.'

The tear to this replieth, 'Yes ! I aye
was born of woe,
And I came forth in very truth, from
mortals' weeping eyes ;
But thou—although in heaven reared,
to earth wilt surely go,
Whilst I the earth shall leave behind
and mount into the skies.'

“ Is it not lovely and affecting ;
and what would you have said if
you had heard her sing it !

“ Books now became a most
pleasant medium of intercom-
munion. I told her that I had
met with her counterpart in a
book.

“ ‘ Then give it me that I may
read it myself,’ she cried, with
womanlike curiosity. But it is,
however, a mania common to us
all—to seek to find our likeness
in the imaginary characters of
fiction.

“ ‘ There are many parts which
any one would think were written
expressly for you.’

“ ‘ Mark them then with a

stroke on the margin; I shall expect the book to-morrow.'

"Mr. Anastasius knew nothing of this conversation, which took place in the garden. The next day she was waiting impatiently for me to give her the book. Besides those portions which I thought exhibited her character, I had also pencilled others merely to tease her—I had marked faults which she did not possess, and also noted some beautiful thoughts of the author's which had some analogy to our position, in its allusion to the feelings.

"The next time Amaryllis saw me she said, with an air of affected indifference, 'The book which you gave me is a disagreeable one; I read the whole of it last night. Most of that which you pencilled I hardly understand, and except a few remarks they don't apply to me.'

" 'I expected all that you have just said, but should very much like to know which passages you think apply to you.'

“Two days afterwards, as I was leaving, she gave me back the book. No student of the Middle Ages ever opened and searched with more eagerness some precious manuscript in a library. I spent a whole hour in studying the parentheses, the notes of interrogation and admiration, which her little hand had written in pencil. I tried to speculate upon those notes, upon the thought and feeling which underlaid each of those signs, and I fell asleep inhaling the sweet fragrance of violets, her much-loved perfume, which was given forth from the volume that I had placed under my pillow. If you look into my books you will find many with marks from her pencil.

“However ridiculous all this may appear to you, it was very pleasant to me. It gratified me the more because the father knew nothing of it, and consequently it had the charm of mystery; and then again, it

seemed so exquisite to have our thoughts, possibly our mutual feelings, exchanged through the distichs of a tender poem, or interesting tale; and lastly, because in this way I learnt and esteemed every day more and more the nobility of her sentiments and the acuteness of her intellect, and also, in the course of that development—herself.

“Yet I found out this was hazardous, when one morning, after a silence of long duration, Amaryllis said as if from the result of much thought—

“‘Do you know, many things that you have marked are enigmas to me. I wish you would explain them.’

“‘Explain them!’ She did not then understand, did not even guess at what was hidden there; and if she could not guess, she might say that she did not understand the feelings which inspired me—that they were impossible: or may be she guessed the whole, and wished to make

my position more difficult through the explanation for which she asked. Little by little, however, her simple frankness changed into very waywardness, and at one moment I was seized with the idea to throw the dice. I said conclusively, these are clear evidences of sympathy towards me, unless indeed they are evidences of the highest vanity. And then I recalled a thousand occurrences amid our interchange of thoughts which would undoubtedly be interpreted by any other person as testimonies of love on her part; yet here my ever mistrusting reasoning rose in opposition to my credulous heart, and all that a moment before had buoyed me up with hopes and dreams were at once reduced to ashes, or were explained away one by one as simple courtesies, or delusions, or my own foolishness.

“But she still kept firm to the explanations, as she called

them. She actually had the patience to copy out of every book the passages which from their being marked were thought worthy of attention, so that when I made a pretext of not remembering what I had pencilled, she gave me her neatly written little note-book, by referring to which I could give her the explanations she wanted. I can't tell why it was, but that night, intoxicated as it were with the scent of her manuscripts, I actually did write down the explanations she sought for ; but what else could such explanations be, but a full confession of my feelings towards her. I remember the commencement—' You desire explanations? Why, is it not pleasing to you to imagine—to suppose—to guess—but you must needs seek a full revelation ! Why do you prefer hot stifling noon to the sweet shady hours of twilight ? The sun of truth is too often scorching—why do you not shun its rays ? In other

words, why do you desire me—to explain?’

“Then I began to unveil the depths of the feelings which inspired me as if they were analogous to the majesty of Nature. I advanced no pretensions, made no solicitations, was haughty in my tone—that is true. I said I intended to leave, in order that I might restore to her the peaceful life which I had disturbed for a moment, as a stone thrown into a calm sea ruffles for a while its smooth, calm surface.

“This was the epilogue:—

“I send you this—my last exhortation. If you are more noble than I, as I believe you to be, conceal your nobleness, pretend indifference, and do not disturb my resolution by your kindness—or perhaps it may bring regret to us both. But, if you are cold and disdainful, if these confessions wound your pride somewhat, and if you deem me insolent, and in the depths of your soul condemn me, oh be

gracious—do not show it, be forbearing, and only pretend indifference, and do not embitter the few last days I may yet spend near you. From you my heart inherits all the happiness it has known; to you it owes the worship of Nature, of which it was before ignorant; to you it owes the love of a calm, peaceful, unharassed life; to you it owes all the sentiments that blossom out of these—and also virtue, and self-respect—those sentinels in the warfare of the common daily life. Wherever you go, wherever the aroma of your love exhales, no unworthy feeling can longer exist. May your years of happiness far from me, be as many as those moments of ecstasy which I enjoyed by your side.'

“I resolved definitely to give her this written confession. Uncertainty had had delights for me, but latterly it had been a martyrdom. What my position was must be made clear, as it was now becoming ridiculous.

But as the time drew near when I had arranged to give her this famous document, together with her note-book, I suddenly repented. I thought it was mean and unworthy of me, and that instead of making my position more defined, it would render it still more difficult. By turns she besought and commanded me, but I remained inflexible, until at last she said angrily :

“ ‘ Very well ; I am only sorry that I have lowered myself so much as to ask you—I, who never before asked a favour of any one.’

“ This took place at night in the open air, whilst her father, fearing the chills of evening, sat within. As soon as she had coldly uttered these last words she went and sat near him, and in a little while, without bidding me any farewell, retired to rest.


“ When I returned to my room I tore up the paper to destroy any further temptation. I was thankful that reason had over-

come feeling. I had not calculated upon this temper of Amaryllis, or I might have constructed it otherwise. Nevertheless this did not persuade me that I had done wrong, and anyhow I had not given occasion for laughter all round. For the last three or four days the ruin of all my hopes had seemed imminent, for hopes unknowingly had grown in profusion round my heart—for hopes, you see, are plants which grow and flourish without any one sowing them.”





VIII.

N Sunday, Mr. Anastasius had invited the prefect and the judge at the Court of Tribunal. They were expected in the morning, and would remain the whole day, as they were desirous to see his estate.

“I went to my neighbour’s in the morning, according to his request, so that we might walk together to the boundaries of his property, and meet the guests whom he expected. I found him in the garden alone. I did not ask after her: there were many plausible reasons why she should not join us. On the way my

companion observed, 'What a lovely morning! How sweet the pines smell bathed as they are with dews. 'Tis a pity my daughter could not go with us.'

"I had expected that she would find some pretence in order not to accompany us, so that she might show how angry she was, but I said, 'Is she unwell?'

"'What! do you not know that little Lela is ill, and that she had so bad a night that my daughter has been sitting up with her?'

"Lela is the steward's little girl, a small angel of four years old. Amaryllis had her christened and gave her the name of her own sister Helena. I do not like children very much, but for this child I had, and have still, a great affection. Besides having a fine face, fair and rosy, with sweet chestnut eyes, you could hardly imagine that she could be born of peasants, but of parents in a much higher rank of life. It was the love which Amaryllis

bore this child which made it more interesting, at least to me. I do not merely love it—I adore it. She clothes it and cares for it like a real mother. Ah ! and how the child loves her ! When there is anything it does not care to do the mere name of Amaryllis will prevail upon it. If you ask whom it loves, it first mentions her, and afterwards its mother and father. I do not conceal the fact that it was thinking upon her love for the child that first led me to love it. I argued to myself thus : Her love and my love centering on that guileless creature will blend into one affection, and blossom as purely as that does. Many times when she held the child in her arms, and it left her to come to me, it seemed to me as if I was holding a portion—a small fraction, as it were—of her love, and I clasped it to my heart ; and whilst pressing my lips on its little cheeks, its eyes, or on its mouth, I seemed to gather thence

all the kisses which she had given it the moment before.

“And this child was ill, and Amaryllis had watched beside it! This news of Mr. Anastasius’s disquieted me, for I could not tell at what time we should return so as to enable me to go and see it.

“The expected visitors kept us, unfortunately, a long while, smoking and conversing with my neighbour about a pine tree. At last they proposed to go through the wood. I will describe them briefly. The deputy from Mani is a tall, broad man of about fifty years of age, with a good, contented, affable face; but his well-known absurdities in dress are unworthy of him, and hardly correspond with his genuine and real merit. Fancy, he came in a tall hat of about the time of the Constitution, with an overcoat once black, pantaloons of gorgeous yellow, smoking-glasses, a necktie as green as a lizard, and leather gloves with the hair on.

“Manolaki, a justice of the

peace and an islander, is his opposite—a cynic philosopher, with a straw hat value thirty and a half farthings, without any necktie, and with torn canvas garments—a short, strong man with a Jewish face.

“The deputy was on horse-back, but the lawyer followed upon a donkey. After the usual greetings, they slackened their pace, and we, accompanying them on foot, went home. In a little while I managed to slip away, and go to the steward’s house, which is close to that of the proprietor. It is a humble cottage, a little better than the other huts. I pushed open the door and entered; you know there are no halls or reception rooms—but going straight out of the road, one finds oneself in the one room that serves all purposes.

“The first object which met my eyes inside was—she. She sat upon a low wooden stool, with the child lying on her knees.

She was uncombed, like one who had been awake all night and watching, and her eyes were red as if she had been weeping. She seemed to me more lovely than ever. Now, without any ornaments, without any added charms—now when she had laid aside all the weapons of her fascinations, near the black chimney and all among the rude utensils which were lying round her, with the sick child in her arms; now, the beauty of her soul shone freely forth, and encircled her head with the aureole which they paint round the heads of angels.

“She gave me a sweet smile of gratitude because I had gone to see her darling. I asked her how it was.

“ ‘Now it is better and is quiet, but it was very ill all night; it had the fever badly and was delirious. Poor thing! did you know how it loves you? In its wanderings it often repeated your name.’

“ ‘And the mother, where is she?’

“ ‘She has gone for a moment to the spring. As soon as she returns, I shall go and dress. We have guests to-day. I have no hunger at all, but what can I do? I have not closed my eyes all night.’

“ ‘The child suddenly moved, and in its sleep its lips murmured two words—her name and mine. Thus coupled together by that mouth! it seemed like an augury, and almost prophetic. I trembled. Amaryllis stooped down and touched its forehead with her lips.

“ ‘‘The fever is less,’ she said softly; ‘if it returns later we must give it quinine.’

“ ‘The door opened and the anxious mother entered, also wearing the signs of a sleepless night, though it was not so evident in her as in Amaryllis.

“ ‘The two women laid the child lightly into a hollow wooden trough which the peasants use

for winnowing, and the mother began to rock it with her naked foot, when we left.

“ ‘You cannot imagine,’ she said, ‘what an anxious night I have passed. The night seemed interminable ; at one moment I thought the child would have expired in my arms,’ and the tears glistened in her eyes.

“ ‘Your fear was needless,’ I said, in an agitated voice ; ‘whilst you were holding the child, there was no fear of its dying.’

“ ‘Pooh !’ she said, smiling, ‘what an idea of yours !’

“ ‘Unfortunately it is not my idea, it is that of the poet, who says :

“ ‘Weep not, happy mother, bow not
down in sorrow,
Your suffering child shall live—it will
not die ;
For see you, if the angel comes it will
not take it. No ;
Because another angel holds it safely
in her arms.” ’


“ ‘What beautiful lines ! you must repeat them to me in order that I may write them down.’

“ She retired to dress, and I went to seek Mr. Anastasius and his guests. A lively discussion on philosophical themes was apparently going on at that moment, for I heard the justice of the peace thus declaiming: ‘Putrefaction produces life; wheat decays in the earth until the time appointed for it to shoot forth. For an example in the animal kingdom, look at cheese, which when spoilt produces a host of maggots, myriads of living creatures; whilst marshy, unwholesome water brings forth gnats and frogs.’ I did not join in this discussion, and hardly heard it. Before my eyes passed the image of Amaryllis, under quite a different aspect, but more beautiful than ever.

“ Happily the child recovered, and the day did not end badly, for she again rejoined our circle. This same evening the functionaries left, having well fed and well drunken of the produce of the fowl-house and cellar of the host.”



IX.

“N Tuesday morning—observe, it *was a Tuesday*¹ — whilst I was at the threshing-floor with my uncle's steward, where there was a real festival because almost all were busy, and whilst for the first time I was considering how much labour is required to produce the bread which the inhabitants of towns find all prepared for their use—some one slapped me on the back, and turning round, I beheld Mr. Anastasius.

“ ‘You have become a veritable

¹ Tuesday is an unlucky day with the Greek peasantry.

householder ; if your uncle saw you he would be delighted,' he said, laughing.

“ ‘ I owe all to you,’ I said ; ‘ the teacher made the pupil—still but a ‘prentice hand, but yet one who has every wish to improve in the future.’ ”

“ ‘ And having progressed thus far is a guarantee for that—for the most arduous part is really to love Nature.’ ”

“ ‘ I have arrived at this, without knowing it. Shall we go to the house and sit down ? ’ ”

“ ‘ No, no ! I dote upon threshing-floors. It pleases me to see the oxen turn the plane so gravely, with their bowed heads, as they grind the corn to powder beneath their feet. Now look at that peasant girl—how splendidly erect she stands, and with what grace she holds the goad ! Any one might take her for an antique statue. Ah, see—I was looking at her, and so she slipped.’ ”

“ ‘ Come and let us sit here in

front of the straw-shed, where there is shade.'

"A peasant ran to place some cushions for us, but we preferred two bundles from the sheaves. After some conversation on various matters, I inquired after his daughter.

" 'She's brought home now,' he answered, as if speaking of a little child, 'and she passes the whole day at the threshing-floor. She takes her embroidery, and goes there in the morning—perhaps she embroiders—and for the most part she returns through the heat of the sun—enough to make the old darling ill.' He uttered this in the weary way in which a joke is often conveyed. After a short silence he resumed :

" 'Since you have introduced the subject, and we are alone, I wish to ask you something, and I beseech you to answer me with frankness.'

" 'Can you doubt me?' I answered, quite unable to conceive what the subject could be.

“ ‘ You may needs be surprised at my question. Be assured that it is only the confidence with which your friendship has inspired me, and my esteem for your character, which induces me to do so. If it were any other but yourself, I would not do it.’

“ At this prologue I began to feel disquieted, as if I had some presentiment of evil.

“ ‘ I am very grateful for your esteem,’ I replied, with some agitation, ‘ and I hope that I shall be able to serve you.’

“ ‘ Well — you know my daughter better than any one else. On account of her living out here away from conventional restraints, and because of your mutual acquirements which accord so well, you occupy with her a very confidential position. Is it not so ?’

“ ‘ Yes,’ I stammered. You may conceive that I was a little confused, wondering whither this was tending.

“ ‘ Paternal love blinds me : in

my eyes my daughter, naturally enough, has no fault whatever, beyond a little frivolity which will pass away in time. Do *you* know of any fault in her apart from a trifling vanity, any graver defect which could occasion fears lest she might make the man who links his fate with hers—unhappy?’

“I was speechless.

“‘Do not hesitate,’ he said, smiling ironically. ‘I know how difficult your position is, but pray, just for one moment, lay aside all typical politenesses, and reflect that you are in the presence of a father who is ready to listen calmly to your opinion of his daughter—to your opinion which is invaluable to him, as a means of ensuring her own future, and making his last years happy. Since you seem to wonder, see what is involved—you are so firm a friend that I can trust you. It is now two years since I gave away my daughter’s hand in promise of marriage.’

“ Think what a bomb bursting this was ! and yet, as if he in no wise observed my consternation, he calmly went on with his usual smile, which now seemed to me rather malicious.

“ ‘ My future son-in-law is all that is excellent—unusually so—just what I could wish, and he loves her—this is most important, as marriage is not a mercantile partnership—and she loves him ! The time is drawing near when this contract must be concluded. I am old—I know not whether I might not suddenly be taken, and my daughter be without a protector. Only one doubt disturbs me : could the man who has to pass his life with her be happy ? ’

“ Forgetting myself, I cried :

“ ‘ He will be the happiest man in the world ! ’

“ I knew directly that I had spoken in an excited tone, for Mr. Anastasius looked fixedly at me, and rising with a smile, gave me his hand. ‘ I believe you,’

he said, ‘and thank you for your opinion, which sets me at ease, and confirms my resolution.’

“Fate decrees that I am to sign the warrant for my own execution !

“When my neighbour left, I reviewed all the bitterness of the situation. What a sudden plunge from Heaven into the gulf ! Happiness had unfolded before me all her magical delights—she had come near to me—I had almost touched her — and — when I stretched forth my hands to receive her gifts—I found it was but a vision—which had faded away—and was gone ! I had myself helped forward greatly the shattering of all my hopes !

“The first resolution which I made, and took almost like an oath to myself, was to put an end to this irrevocably. Since my happiness was lost, I could at least preserve my pride ; and this could only be done by an assumed apathy—and a quick departure—yes—the very next day.

“ If, in love, boldness consists in flight, as the poet says, my action was nothing short of timidity.

“ I then began to look at all the circumstances from every point of view. In Amaryllis’s conduct towards me, I only beheld a woman’s vanity and frivolity, and not the least sign of sympathy or love. In the very unusual proceeding of her father, who came for me to advise him in regard to his daughter, I found but this simple explanation: he had discovered my love for her, and in order to sunder my hopes in a gentle and kindly way, had revealed that his daughter *loved another*—that she belonged to this other—and I—could go at large. Later on my ideas changed a little; but then so many blessings seemed rent from me, that fortunately I was compelled to arm myself with an indifference which was quite unique of its kind. Lest, however, my mind might again

waver, I sent a man to the town, and telegraphed to my uncle that I should leave on the morrow. I then prepared my things, to the great grief and distress of the country people—but to the great joy of the steward, who had been deprived of his gains at the threshing-floor.

“The news of my intended departure immediately spread, and reached my neighbour to whom I went to say farewell, for before I spoke, he said, with pretended surprise :

“ ‘ Well, are you really going ? ’

“ ‘ Yes,’ I said, dryly, ‘ it is requisite for me to return to Athens.’

“ ‘ But you said nothing about it this morning.’

“ ‘ I had a telegram at mid-day.’

“ I really believe he knew this to be false, but he acted as if he thought it true. He wished, you see, friend, to make my departure easy !

“ At that moment the door

opened, and Amaryllis entered, rosy red and lighted up by the sun.

“ ‘What! do you go away?’ she cried, in a tone of wonder and mistrust.

“ ‘Yes, unhappily.’

“ I contrived to keep my apathetic manner, but my heart was torn within me to think that this was the last time I should see her.

“ ‘Don’t go!’ she said, with most persuasive sweetness which almost electrified me.

“ ‘I assure you I don’t wish to go, but *I must*.’ I laid great stress on ‘*I must*,’ and from the corner of my eye saw Mr. Anastasius smiling!

“ ‘Since you *must*, well and good,’ she said with bitterness, and at once assumed a more haughty and imperious air than ever. This she maintained throughout supper, and until my departure at eleven o’clock.

“ When I offered her my hand for the last time, my knees gave

way, and I sank into a chair—whilst she, who had thus overcome me, remained perfectly unmoved !

“ ‘ It is evident that she never cared anything for me,’ I said to myself, and I silently took my farewell.

“ ‘ Much enjoyment in Athens!’ were her last cold, stinging words.

“ Mr. Anastasius said he would come in the morning, so it was needless for him to say farewell then. I mounted, and took the road to the towers. As soon as I heard the door slam violently behind me—that true door to my happiness, I lost all courage ; for very little, I would have turned back and knocked, and would have gone to throw myself at the feet of the master of the house, to tell him my happiness dwelt with him—I loved his daughter. Well, but does she love me ? Is not her indifference quite manifest ? Can any woman who loves bear herself thus ? She loves another

—she loves that fortunate man, her future husband! Did not her father tell me so, plainly and decidedly, this very morning at the threshing-floor? Does she not love me? But could she then behave like that? Again, no! it was not her simplicity. No, a woman who loves could never treat me thus! unless she was terribly vain. There is no help for it but to say that she is vain beyond all parallel!’ But my heart bore witness to the contrary, in face of all these conclusions of the reason; and its testimony became so strong, that when I had nearly reached the tower, it impelled me to turn back again, that I might appeal for the last time at her closed windows. ‘I love her,’ said a voice in my heart, ‘and because I love her she will at least tell me that she is worthy of my love.’

“I turned back over the flinty roads, to the great astonishment and grief of my horse. I was near it once more. I discerned

neath the starlight the pretty white house where I met her first ; but as I approached nearer, I argued with myself on the stupidity of going back—for how could they see me, or, if they did, how interpret my behaviour? But I was not master of myself. I arrived before the side-door under the windows which faced the road. Her room was lighted, and the blinds closed. I stationed myself exactly underneath and fixed my gaze on the window. Her loosened hair fell around her—I could not see her face, but her movements were uneasy and restless. I succeeded in moving a little further off ; I stooped and looked down—I was fortunately in shadow.

“ ‘ Who is there ? ’ she called out impatiently.

“ ‘ I,’ I whispered.

“ ‘ You ? ’ The tone in which she said ‘ you ’ is inexpressible.

“ ‘ Yes.’ A moment more, and I would have told her all ; but if she laughed in response to my

feelings!—*for she loves another!*
This thought chilled me.

“‘I lost my cigar case,’ I said (this pretext came ready to hand)—‘I thought that it might have fallen here when I was riding, and so I came—to look for it, but now I find I have got it—in—in another pocket——’

“My tongue fearfully compromised me in all this, and for answer she shut the window violently, without even wishing me ‘Good night’—not even ‘Good night.’

“I fled like a madman, and so tormented my wretched horse that I reached the tower in five or six minutes. It is a wonder I did not dash against some pine tree in the darkness and get wrecked. I had delightful sleep that night!

“In the morning as soon as the sun rose, I left. Mr. Anastasius waited for me at his boundaries, and when we parted he did not leave me without an embrace, and clasping my hand

in both his, said, 'I am sure we shall see you again very soon.'

" 'Yes,' I said to myself, 'when you see me again, write me that——'

"Need I tell you how my heart was torn with grief and despair through all the journey? You know it. The sea fortunately made me so wretchedly ill, that I had no feeling for anything; but now I am back again, now that I have told you all—all—the wound which had closed a little is reopened——

"What will you? I do not say that I shall die! nor that as this is my first, it will be my last love throughout my whole life! No, there is no feeling which time will not extinguish, but it will need a long—a very long time—to quench this."





X.

“**T**HIS is first love—this is true love — and therefore it is that you are thus overwhelmed with grief. Gradually, by degrees, your heart will be healed, for so it is with all of us. Yet I must tell you one thing: notwithstanding all that has taken place, it is quite certain to me that she loves you.”

I had taken up my hat to go, for it was noon. His last words plunged me again into thought.

“What! Now, whilst looking back, when I can see clearer and can form a cooler judgment, this idea,” I said, “has also

rooted itself in my mind. I am grieved indeed if her happiness be endangered through me. Is it not enough that I suffer!"

Suddenly the door of the room was opened, and Mr. Aristides, Stephen's uncle, entered rather hastily with his bright and smiling face. He is a man of about sixty years of age, but has as much vitality as three young men of twenty.

"What are you after here, old fellows; you've got into congress early! Secrets, eh?—won't you let me into them? Ah, you rascal! I'll lay a wager upon what you have been talking to this other rascal here," he said, pointing to his nephew.

"We've not engaged in anything serious, uncle," murmured Stephen, still in a melancholy voice.

"I know it's nothing *serious*, but you take it so. Come now, what will you give me if I make you both laugh out heartily?"

"I am laughing merely at the

joke of such a proposal," said Stephen, with a faint smile.

"Ah! each is perverse—eh? But tell me what was the conversation you were holding with your friend here since early morn. You have been telling him of your success, and your loves with the daughter of——"

He interrupted him excitedly—"How? what? do you then know about it?" he cried, with agitation.

"Do you think I do not hear what goes on in my estate? I do know, and know also why you left, you stupid fellow—yes, I knew all about it."

Stephen was silent and astounded, and I myself not much less so than he.

"Before you state your case, just sit down and listen to a little tale I am about to tell you," pursued Mr. Aristides, seating himself with unabated cheerfulness. "Once upon a time, there was a good man who had for his friend another very good man; whilst

they were eating and drinking together, the former turns to the latter and says, 'I have a nephew of gold, and you have a daughter who is a diamond, let us set the diamond in the gold.'"

I began to guess what this legend was. My friend's face became more and more excited, and his breathing seemed arrested. His uncle went on gaily :

" ' Good ! ' said friend to friend, ' I wish it also, but only on one agreement—that when a fit time comes, you'll send your nephew to see her without telling him anything. He will thus get acquainted with my daughter : if one suits the other, and he is to my taste, the affair is concluded. Your hand upon it,' and they clasped each other's hands."

" Are you joking, uncle ? " gasped Stephen, not daring to trust to the un hoped-for bliss which the words of his uncle revealed.

" Silence ! I've not told you the moral. One of them was Mr.

Anastasius—the other myself! You comprehend now, you idiot! you doubter!—and the heart is well again! Eh?”

Stephen was unable to throw off his surprise; he looked in a bewildered manner alternately at his uncle and myself, as if he feared we were playing some jest upon him—which, to tell the truth, was not an uncommon occurrence with us.

“Ah! do you require a miracle, you unbeliever!—you want proofs, eh? Well, I have them written down here. Behold these letters from your future father-in-law which he sent me every week,” and he threw a bundle of letters on to the table. “Here are to be found all the foolish things which you did, which not only perplexed the daughter, but the father also. See, here is his letter of to-day, and yours with it! Now make yourself ready and hasten back again, before the maiden is ill from your bad treatment of her. Love-critic!

heart-stealer! do you not see what I prepared for you? Come now and kiss me."

Stephen did not linger after this invitation from his uncle, but almost smothered him with embraces and kisses.

"Come, come, that will do—that's enough! Do you want to kill me, so that you may inherit from me at once? You'll choke me—help! help! enough! enough! Go now to your friend—to your ghostly adviser——"

I submitted gladly to Stephen's embraces; the unexpected solution of his love idyll delighted me.

"Come—let us all dine together. I'll open a fresh bottle of Cyprus for you, and we'll drink to the health of—somebody."

Stephen quite assented to his views, but had no appetite at dinner, for his heart was too well content for his stomach to feel hungry. He was agitated, moreover, from the perusal of Mr. Anastasius's letter to him, which

was long and unveiled the whole of the network which he and Mr. Aristides had woven, in order to inveigle into love, without their knowledge, those two innocent doves—himself and Amaryllis—as Stephen determines still to call her.

“If you had both known of the secret bond,” he wrote, “you would have been sure to have acted a part before each other; you would not have learnt all the charm, nor the disquietudes, no, nor the obligations of love. Perhaps—perhaps even yet, you have not realized that sweet feeling which has blossomed by itself.” Later on he added: “The trial which I imposed upon you the last day was severe, I allow; but I wished to see to what point your pride would reach, also to ascertain the power of your will in the face of a stronger feeling. For this purpose I allowed you to suspect her to the last. I am not sorry that I tyrannized a little, for I

honour you for it, as you came out a martyr to honour—and a man must always put honour before love.” Then, in conclusion, he wrote: “My daughter loves you—this I have long known; if you had given her the smallest explanation, she would certainly have revealed it. Your closed lips kept her heart closed—but you have not been injured thereby. Feelings that are held in check, only grow the stronger. Since you left she is much changed—she neither eats, drinks, nor sleeps; she has lost the cheerfulness which a short time since was her chief charm. I have told her nothing—I leave for you the laurels of the contest: I merely showed her your uncle’s telegram (which I asked him to send) saying, that he would come in a few days, and you with him. She had a bright look for one moment—then shaking her head mistrustfully, her melancholy mood returned. Telegraph therefore, as soon as you receive my

letter, that you are coming, and then she will more readily believe. I expect you with impatience. It is an unnecessary cruelty to leave in doubt any longer the two whom we love so much."

Stephen had hardly read this letter, when he rushed from the table.

"The house is not coming down, is it?" said the uncle to me. "But he is right—you don't know the kind of girl this is: if I were younger, I would not let him have her."





XI.

AFTER a few days, Stephen and his uncle left. Upon this occasion he sent me a very early epistle. The most interesting part of his letter was his description of the meeting, as follows:—

“I left my uncle behind with my things, and hurried on direct to my future father-in-law. It was eight o’clock in the morning when I arrived. They were both awaiting me in the summer-house, but they had not expected me so soon. I exchanged a hearty greeting with Mr. Anastasius, accompanied by a significant look. She let fall her

embroidery, her face flushed, and her hand trembled as it met my own. She did not utter one word. Her father alone expressed his gratification at my returning to the country so soon.

“ ‘It is as welcome to us as your departure was disappointing. Is not this true?’ he asked, turning to his daughter.

“She murmured an indistinct ‘Yes,’ and resumed her embroidery. Her father saw the embarrassment under which we were both labouring, and left us alone for a few moments, pretending that he had some business to attend to.

“She did not raise her head, but seemed absorbed in her needlework.

“I drew near and stood before her.

“ ‘What is it that makes you so angry with me?’ I said, in a trembling voice.

“She did not lift her eyes to mine, and still bending down

as before, only stammered out
‘Nothing.’

“I could no longer restrain myself.

“‘You continue to think me disagreeable and foolish—and foolish indeed and selfish beyond all others are those people who do not recognize where their true happiness lies. No, you wrong me—I know full well where my true happiness lies; and if I felt compelled to flee it for a short time, because “I must,” as I said—I come back now to find it again—here, far from the world, in this paradise of life!’

“She raised her face at this, and looked at me with her clear gaze as if she asked me the drift of my speech.

“‘I love you,’ I made answer to that unspoken question, mustering up all the courage that was hidden in my soul. ‘I love you! Did you not know it—did you not guess it a long while ago? I have loved you from the

first day when I saw you in this summer-house adorned with roses and cherries—I love you !’

“The embroidery again fell from her hands ; she looked me in the face, but did not move—as though there was incense in my words which enthralled her.

“ ‘ But yet—you went away,’ she said, in an accent of pain.

“ ‘ I went away, because it was needful that I should go away. If you knew why I went away—and you will know it soon—you would not speak to me thus. I went away—in order to return again—and to be happy—if you love me.’

“ Her face immediately lighted up with something of its former brightness.

“ ‘ If I love him,’ she said, colouring ‘ if I love him—as if the stupid fellow did not know that already.’

“ Pray what else would you have done in my place, but close that charming mouth with a kiss !

“How I have longed to have you near me during these last days—friendship encircling love makes the most charming of posies! But you will come when my happiness reaches its highest point—you will come. My Amaryllis (I shall always call her by that name, for it pleases her also to be thus called) prepared a peasant girl’s costume solely—solely—to wear it when she was a bride: that is the reason why the saucy little thing said to me some time ago, when I asked her why she was making such a dress, ‘What is that to you? You will come and see her. As a bride, she will indeed be ‘Amaryllis.’

“My uncle is more gay than ever. He told me this morning at breakfast that happiness, like property, could only be obtained in two ways—either by chance or circumstance, or by labour and care; and that the most valuable and the safest posses-

sion, as well as the most true and precious happiness, is that which has cost us the most pains and trouble in the acquiring. I have suffered so much in the obtaining this my present bliss, that I am well assured of its duration. Am I not ? ”



THE GRESHAM PRESS,

UNWIN BROTHERS,

CHILWORTH AND LONDON.





3 0112 072900118